

## ABSTRACT

### EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLE AND  
THE LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS AS RELATED TO STUDENT ACADEMIC  
IMPROVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE

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This study examined the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as related to student academic improvement and discipline. The following independent variables were: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, level of implementation of character education, student character development, character development in students with discipline problems, character climate, student and teacher demographics. The dependent variables were student academic and student discipline improvement. A quantitative study using

a survey instrument was conducted using 25 schools. All school varied according to their socioeconomic status. The 25 schools were not randomly selected but represented the schools approved by local principals to participate in the study. Ninety percent of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in each school responded to a character climate questionnaire. The results of the study indicated a strong interrelated relationship based on a factor analysis among the following variables: student character development, principals' leadership style in character education, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, character development of students with discipline problems, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. The regression analysis revealed a significant positive Beta coefficient (.666) that was significant at the .05 level for the dependent variable student discipline improvement with respect to student academic improvement. Also, the dependent variable, student academic and discipline improvement, had a positive Beta coefficient (.575) that was significant at the .05 level. Student academic improvement and level of implementation of character education programs had a positive Beta coefficient (.208) that was significant at the .05 level. Based on the results, it was recommended that principals support the implementation of the character education program and provide systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the character education program. Grade level chairpersons and the character education committee should provide assistance to teachers with developing innovative strategies and techniques for teaching character education lessons as an integral part of curriculum and instruction.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The initiative to teach character education to students in the United States public schools dates back before the 1920s and 1930s. The emphasis on character education programs was first observed during the Second World War. Public schools at this time focused on promoting moral and civic responsibility to the nation. In 1966, there was a second wave of interest in teaching core ethical values and moral reasoning sparked by Lawrence Kohlberg when he presented an article that “. . .linked his cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning with the practice of moral education in public schools” (Leming, 1997, p. 2). This resulted in a renewed interest in teaching our youth character education in public schools for the next twenty years.

Since the early 1980s, character education has emerged in the United States public educational and political arena as an effort to address “moral values, ethics, and citizenship education” (Lickona, 1996, p. 93). There is a vigorous push by special interest groups to implement character education programs in public schools. Among these are The Character Education Partnership, The Character Counts Coalition, and The Communitarian Network. During the Ronald Reagan administration, former Secretary of Education William Bennett called for educators in public schools to take an active role in “shaping the character of youth” (Leming, 1997, p. 24). He has also written several

books on character development. One of his many books entitled The Book of Virtues provides students with literary examples of how to demonstrate virtuous conduct.

Legislation has also been passed in several states to implement comprehensive character education programs in public schools. The emphasis on character education was reiterated in the political arena with former President William Clinton hosting a White House Conference to discuss building character among America's youth. Politicians and educators often grapple with what character education programs should include in public schools. There are some people who argue that character education should reflect traditional values and others who disagree with this notion. According to Ryan and Lickona (1996), the purpose of character education is to help children "... know the good, love the good, and do the good . . . it is the responsibility of schools to indoctrinate children with the community's very best virtues" (Lickona, 1996, pp. 78-79).

The State Department of Education in Georgia has defined character education as "the process by which positive personality traits are developed, encouraged, and reinforced through example, study, and practice" (O.C.G. 20-2-145-Comprehensive Character Education Program). Despite the dissension among educators and politicians in respect to what character education programs should emphasize in public schools, several states have led the initiative to incorporate character education programs into their public schools: Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Utah, California, New Hampshire, and Georgia (Ryan, 1996).

Contrary to belief, the widespread proliferation of character education programs in public schools has not provided sufficient evidence to indicate how successful these

programs have been with improving the character development of students. According to Leming (1997, p. 7), there is limited research in the field of character education due to the lack of operational definitions for determining outcomes with valid and reliable instruments. The Character Education Partnership identifies eleven principles for effective character education among which are: “(1) Integrate ethics and virtues in academic subjects; (2) Involve the entire staff; (3) Partner with parents and community; (4) Agree on and actively promote core ethical values; and (5) Assess results” (Schaeffer, 1998, p. 4). There is a compelling responsibility among educators in an era of accountability to evaluate all programs that are implemented in public schools.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a system-wide character education program that is being implemented in a metropolitan school district. The study focused on the effectiveness of character education programs at the elementary level as it related to student academic improvement and discipline. The study consisted of third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers completing a questionnaire based on the following independent variables: teachers’ perceptions of the principals’ leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics (gender, chronological age, years of experience, educational level, and grade level taught by the teachers— third, fourth, or fifth), and student demographics (Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for reading and math composite scores - 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced

lunch). The dependent variables were student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as related to student academic improvement and discipline. Since the 1980s, character education has emerged in the United States as an effort to address the decline in the moral behavior of youth that is reflected in the "rise of youth violence, dishonesty, disrespect for parents, peer cruelty, and a decline in work ethic" (Lickona, 1996, p.45).

The character education movement has evolved as one of the predominant areas of educational concerns in the 1990s. School reform initiatives have attempted, through comprehensive character education programs, to respond to the decay in morals and values that is manifested by today's youth and is ubiquitous to society. Several states including Georgia have passed legislation requiring public schools to implement comprehensive character education programs for students in grades kindergarten through twelve.

### Background of the Problem

The Georgia State Board of Education adopted rule 160-4-2-33, "Values Education," thereby taking a significant step toward teaching social skills to students in the public schools. This rule resulted in 27 core values to be taught under the broad

categories of respect for self, respect for others, and citizenship in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The Values Clarification Program implemented in 1991 closely resembles the current national movement to implement character education in public schools. The state of Georgia is recognized for being in the forefront of character education instruction, largely because of the recent passing of legislation by the State Department of Education in 1997-1998 requiring that a mandatory comprehensive character education program be developed and implemented in all public schools by 2000-2001 for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The curriculum, according to the State Department of Education, would focus on students developing the following character traits: courage, patriotism, citizenship, honesty, fairness, respect for others, kindness, generosity, punctuality, respect for the environment, and other virtues. The program would be designed to discourage bullying or other acts of violence or aggression toward other students. The programs would also encourage the faculty, staff, parents, and community to take an active part in character education (O.C. G. 20-2-745- Comprehensive Character Education Program).

Although in the state of Georgia character education programs are being taught in all public schools, one may pose the following questions: How effective are character education programs in improving student achievement and student behavior? What do educators currently know about the success rate of implementing effective character education programs? According to Leming (1997), "The research in the field of character education runs the gamut from reliance on anecdotal and testimonial to experimental studies where serious errors have been made to control potential sources of bias"

(Leming, 1997, p. 7). Because of significant challenges with a variety of objectives and lack of carefully crafted operational definitions for determining outcomes with valid and reliable instruments, the research in the field of character education is limited. Hence, research is needed to examine the effectiveness of character education programs in relation to improving student academic performance and discipline.

This study examined the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementing character education programs as related to student academic improvement and discipline.

#### Program Description of Character Education

Gholar defines character education as follows: "a planned, comprehensive, systematic approach for teaching self-respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, and citizenship" (Wood & Roach, 1999, p. 213).

A school district in the Atlanta metropolitan area has implemented a system-wide character education program based on the West Point Model which was developed by Mr. Bill Parsons for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The character education program has five components designed to encourage teachers to facilitate character development for students in the classroom. The first component in the program is the definition of the character trait. The second component is classroom application, which encourages students to identify ways in which their classmates and school personnel demonstrate the character trait on a daily basis. The third components are school, community, and historical examples of the character traits. The fourth component



is application of a related story to the character trait, and the fifth component is teacher application. The teacher reviews the character trait with the students and relates it to a story in literature. The school system has developed a system-wide approach to teaching specific character traits on a monthly basis. Each month the school is required to teach a character virtue and is encouraged to implement the West Point Model when teaching the character virtue. The schools may elect to do other creative activities to emphasize the character trait of the month including: announcements over the intercom that reflect special thoughts or poems that promote the character trait of the month, displays in the hall with pictures of students who have demonstrated the character trait for the month, and activities to involve parents in reinforcing the character traits at home through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Newsletters. Schools may also display the character word on the school marquee.

Character education programs, when consistently implemented in the school, may prove to be effective in addressing many of the moral and social issues of modern society. Recent research has revealed that when character education programs are strategically planned and organized with connecting ideas, practicing, and reinforcing concepts to the students' knowledge base students experience success in achieving the goals of the program. The Character Education Partnership describes the importance of teaching character education in the public schools as a systematic approach that must be integrated into the curriculum. According to Schaeffer (1998):

Character must be comprehensively defined to include thinking, feeling, and behaviors. The school must be a caring community.

Students should be provided opportunities to display moral behavior, there must be a commitment to intrinsic motivation to do good, and school staff should be actively involved in the education program. (Schaeffer, 1998, p. 17)

### Character Education, Student Academic Improvement, and Student Discipline

There have been numerous reports in the literature proclaiming the effectiveness of the character education movement and its relationship to student academic improvement and student discipline. Thomas Lickona (1997) in his Georgia Humanities lecture states, “West Point’s daily character education program has reportedly raised test scores and improved school wide discipline” (Lickona, 1997, p.10). Educators are faced with a number of perplexing dilemmas in regard to educating our youth in public schools. Recent demands for accountability in public education will require that we evaluate the effectiveness of character education programs in light of claims that they improve students’ behavior and increase students’ performance on standardized tests. Although character education programs are being implemented in schools throughout the targeted school district, how effective are these programs in improving student achievement? How consistent are educators in implementing character education programs in schools?

### Character Education and School Climate

The assumption is that if character education programs are consistently and systematically implemented in the public schools, they will create a caring community;

thereby, improving student behavior and student achievement. This is predicated on the belief that character education programs are taught as an integral part of the curriculum and not in isolation.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style in Character Education and the School District's Organizational Structure**

This study focuses on the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education to determine if there is a correlation between the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs in public schools. The leadership style of the principal is believed to have a significant impact on the teachers' performance in terms of implementing character education programs. According to Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1996, p. 141), when leaders allow teachers to share in the decision making process, the leader demonstrates more confidence and security in the group members and employs consulting type leadership behaviors. The teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style can impact the degree to which the people in the organization are successful in achieving specific goals. If the goal of the leader is to implement a comprehensive character education program, then the leader must be willing to encourage and support teachers in developing the techniques that will be helpful in accomplishing the goal. The organizational structure of the school system can help to facilitate or impede this progress by placing too many restraints upon teachers. The organizational structure of the school district is reflected in Figure 1. The organizational structure chart is adapted from the

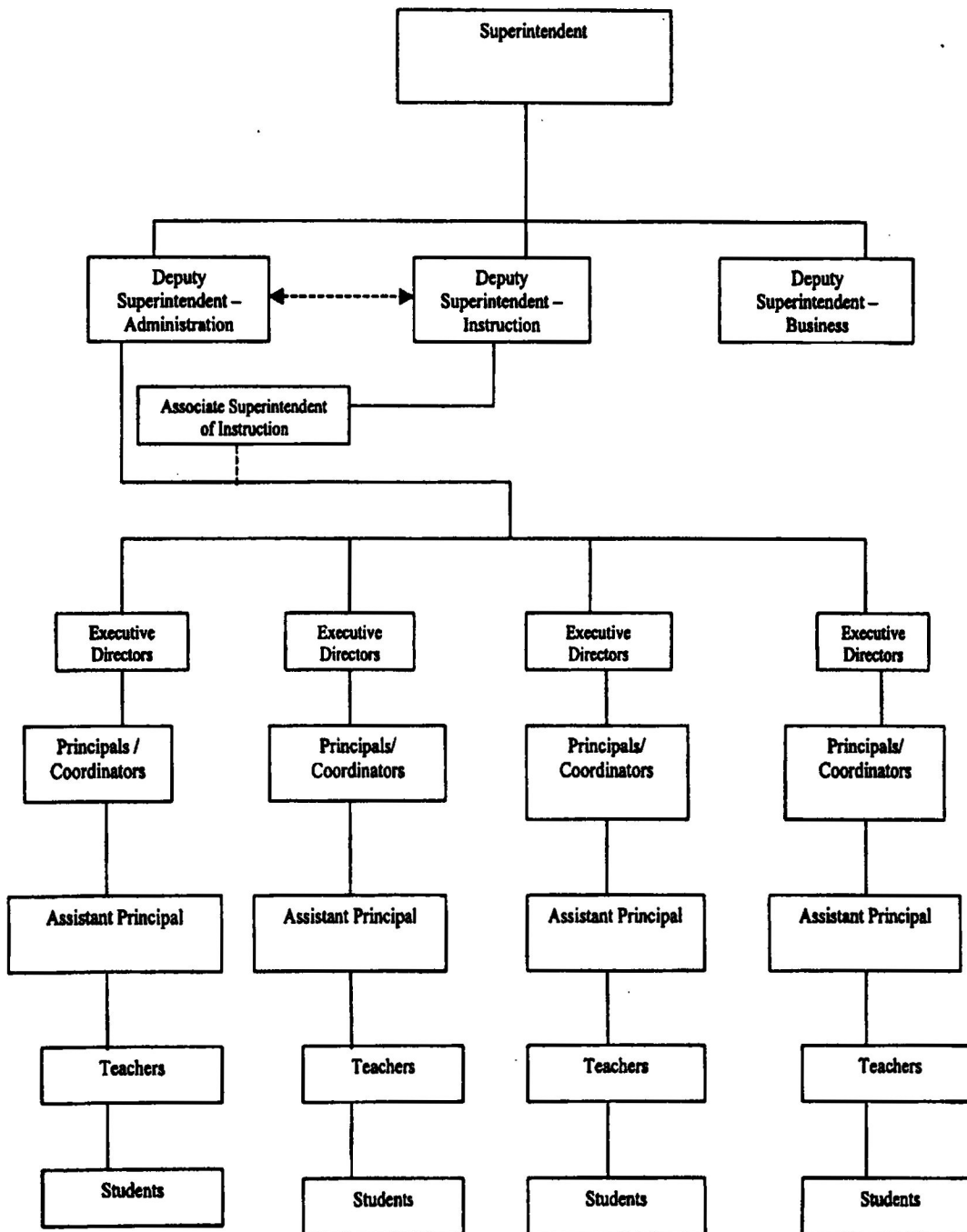


Figure 1. School District's Organizational Chart

school district's organizational chart dated November 17, 1997. The organizational structure that is directly related to the instructional program is delineated as follows: the Superintendent supervises the Deputy Superintendents, the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction supervises the Associate Superintendent of Instruction. The Deputy Superintendent of Administration supervises the Executive Directors. The Executive Directors who have Instructional Teams composed of math and reading consultants provide direct supervision to the local Principals. The organizational structure has two separate departments, School Improvement and Curriculum and Instruction, each of which has a Coordinator with support staff. The local School Principal is then responsible for the faculty and staff within the school, and the normal hierarchical chain of command follows with Assistant Principal, Counselor, Department Chairpersons and Teachers reporting to the Principal.

### Problem

The school district, located in a metropolitan area, is the second largest school district in the state of Georgia. The school district has 127 schools with a total student enrollment of approximately 96,000. Educators are perplexed with the statistics that reveal a significant increase in discipline referrals and a steady decline in students' performance on standardized achievement tests throughout the school district. In an effort to address the concerns of educators, parents, and meet the needs of the students, the school board has developed three broad goals: (1) to improve student achievement in reading and math (and recently expanded to include core subjects, as measured by, but

not limited to, measurement of standardized test scores), (2) to decrease the number of discipline referrals, and (3) to improve human relations and communication among faculty, staff, parents, and students.

The school district has a diverse student population that consists of students from 50 different countries among which are students who speak more than 20 languages. The demographics of the school system are described as follows: 3.9% - Asian Pacific, 5.9% - Hispanic, 76.4% - African American, 11.4% - Caucasian, and 2.1% - Multiracial. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch is 53.1% for the school district.

Several programs have been implemented throughout the district in an effort to improve student achievement, discipline, and human relations. The system-wide implementation of Character Connections in 2000-2001 was a systematic approach to address the behavior of students in a proactive manner. This study examines the effectiveness of a comprehensive character education program as it relates to student achievement. The study consists of the following independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of the character education programs in the local schools, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics – gender, chronological age, years of experience, educational level, and grade level taught by the teacher (third, fourth, or fifth), and student demographics – Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for reading and math composite scores – 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variables are student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Statement of the Problem

This study examines the effectiveness of character education programs in relationship to student academic improvement and student discipline as a result of the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs. Character education programs have been implemented throughout the state of Georgia and nation wide to address the current plight of youth and the decline in behavior of youth. Thomas Lickona (1997), has identified ten troubling trends of our youth among which are "lack of respect for peers, teachers and adults; increase in peer cruelty; rise in youth violence; and a decline in personal responsibility and civic responsibility" (p. 8). These behaviors are manifested not only in the community, but in local schools thereby significantly impacting negatively the learning environment. Although the State of Georgia Board of Education has mandated that character education be taught in all public schools, substantial research has not been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. The research literature has not provided sufficient evidence with respect to the level in which character education programs are being implemented in the local schools and their effectiveness, although some proclaim them to be effective in improving student discipline and student academic achievement.

The effectiveness of character education programs may be difficult to evaluate based on the review of literature where Leming (1997, p. 7) discusses the lack of careful definitions for outcomes and valid and reliable instruments for conducting research in the field of character education. Although recent legislation requires that school districts in

the state of Georgia implement comprehensive character education programs, there is a need for research to evaluate how effective these programs are with improving student discipline and student academic improvement.

The Atlanta metropolitan school district examined in this study has encouraged the local schools to adopt the West Point Model as part of the Character Connections for teaching character education system-wide. This study examines how successful character education programs are being implemented in the district's elementary schools. The study is designed to evaluate the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style and the level of implementation of character education programs as related to student academic improvement and student discipline.

### Significance of the Study

The findings of the study can provide significant information in the field of education as follows:

1. The study can provide research on how the principal's leadership style in character education can affect the level of implementation of character education programs in local schools and its impact on student academic improvement and student discipline.
2. The study has implications for research regarding the factors that impact school climate and student achievement.
3. The study can contribute to educational research by providing valuable information on how effective character education programs are in schools with



regard to improving character development in students and creating a positive learning environment that may enhance student achievement.

4. The study can provide information related to leadership style and the impact it has on teachers commitment to work to achieve the goals of the organization. Information from this study could provide more insight into theories of motivation and factors that influence outcomes of organizations based on the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership styles in character education.

### Research Questions

The research questions are designed to explain the relationship between the independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics (gender, chronological age, years of experience, educational level, and grade level taught by teacher – third, fourth, or fifth), student demographics (Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for reading and math composite scores-2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch), and the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

1. Based on a statistical factor analysis procedure, would the dependent variables for student academic improvement and student discipline improvement be placed in the same factor as the independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character

development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, and students with discipline problems character development?

2. Based on a statistical factor analysis procedure, would the teacher demographic variables such as gender, chronological age, years of experience, educational level, and grade level taught by teacher- third, fourth, or fifth be placed in the same factor as dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement?
3. Based on a statistical factor analysis procedure, would the student demographic variables such as Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for reading and math composite scores - 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch be placed in the same factor as dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement?

### Summary

Character education programs have been implemented in public schools to address the decline in moral behavior of our youth. The State Department of Education in Georgia has led the initiative to implement mandatory comprehensive character education programs in all public schools for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The curriculum, according to the State Department of Education, would focus on students developing 27 specific character traits under the broad category of respect for self, respect for others, and citizenship. The State Department of Education asserts that

the program should be designed to discourage bullying or other acts of violence or aggression toward other students.

According to Leming (1997, p. 7), the lack of quality research in the field of character education is due largely to the lack of carefully crafted operational definitions for determining outcomes on the effectiveness of character education programs. In an era of accountability educators are faced with the responsibility of providing readily available quantifiable data to support programs in public schools. A large metropolitan school district with a diverse student population has implemented a comprehensive character education program based on the West Point Model developed by Mr. Bill Parsons. Research questions are included to examine the relationship between the independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics: gender, chronological age, years of experience, grade level taught and educational level, student demographics: Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for reading and math composite scores - 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, and the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter contains a substantial review of educational and research literature related to the independent and dependent variables presented in the study. The independent variables in the study are the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, the level of implementation for character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics, and student demographics. The dependent variables are student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The literature is presented according to the following topics: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style and character education programs, principals' leadership style on school climate, student achievement, and teacher demographics, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, student character development, student achievement and student discipline.

### Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style on Implementing Character Education Programs

Wood and Roach (1999) conducted a study to determine the perceptions of administrators and teachers on the implementation of a comprehensive character education program. The study conducted in South Dakota included two hundred administrators who were randomly selected and mailed a questionnaire to complete. Sixty percent of the questionnaires were returned. The results of the questionnaire revealed that administrators were supportive of character education programs being implemented as part of the curriculum. Teachers and parents were also supportive. The five most important character education values that were rated as important as part of the curriculum were responsibility, honesty, good citizenship, respect, and cooperation.

### Principals' Leadership Style on School Climate, Student Achievement, and Teacher Demographics

Erpelding (1999) conducted a study in the elementary school setting to determine if there was a relationship among a teacher's perceptions of the principal's school vision, teacher autonomy, school climate, and student achievement. The data were collected based on three surveys and questionnaires given to fourth grade teachers. The principals were also asked to complete a questionnaire. The participants in the study were sixty-nine teachers and sixty-six principals. Pearson correlations were used to calculate school vision, teacher autonomy, and school climate. Results of the study indicated that a positive correlation was found between the principals' vision, teacher autonomy, and

school climate. Teacher autonomy and school climate were significantly correlated to student achievement and socio-economic status.

Rubio (1999) conducted a study in which he explored the association between the principals' leadership styles and their effect on school climate as perceived by teachers. The researcher used the school assessment survey by Research for Better Schools as an instrument to measure school climate. The Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire by Edwin Fleishman was used to measure leadership styles. One hundred forty-six pairs of surveys on principal leadership style and school climate were collected in the study. The results of the study indicated principals who had received high ratings of consideration also had the highest ratings for positive climates. The differences in the scores were found to be significant using ANOVA and Post Hoc Scheffe tests.

Allred (1980) conducted a study to determine the relationship between teacher morale and the principal's leadership style. The study was designed to examine if there was a significant relationship between teacher demographics (age, sex, educational level, and length of service) in relationship to the teacher's perceptions of the principal's leadership style and teacher morale. The Purdue Teacher Questionnaire was used to evaluate teacher's responses on morale. The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire was used to evaluate teacher's perceptions of the principal's leadership style. The instruments were administered to 496 teachers, and 268 teachers returned both questionnaires. The results of the study indicated the following: (1) There was a significant positive relationship between teacher morale and the teacher's perceptions of principal's leadership style. (2) There was a significant and positive relationship between

teacher morale and age of the teacher. (3) There was a significant positive relationship between the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership style and age of the teacher. (4) There was a significant positive relationship between the teacher's morale and length of service.

The following study was designed to examine teacher demographics with respect to the implementation of a character education program. Pope (1999) conducted a study to determine if there was a relationship between the personal demographics of Mississippi Family and Consumer Science Teachers on Family Dynamics with respect to teaching selected state mandated character education objectives. The teachers completed a personal demographic questionnaire and a Family Dynamic questionnaire. There were 134 questionnaires returned. The results of the study revealed a significant relationship existed at the .05 alpha level between personal demographics for Family and Consumer Science Teachers on Family Dynamics and the emphasis that they placed on teaching selected character education objectives.

Breed (1997) conducted a quantitative research study to determine if there was a relationship between teacher's perceptions of the principal's leadership behavior and the use of participatory decision-making practices in schools. The study consisted of 224 regular elementary education teachers from 37 elementary schools in the Lincoln Public Schools. Two survey instruments were used to conduct the study. The Teacher Involvement and Participation Scale 2 and the Change Facilitator Style Questionnaire were sent to teachers to examine their perceptions on the principal's leadership style and participatory decision-making practices. The results of the study revealed that teachers

who perceived their principals as initiators tended to have more involvement in decision-making based on all eight dimensions of the participatory decision-making continuum. The teacher's responses to the survey classified only 24% of the principals as initiators. Teachers identified 27% of the principals in the study as responders. Teachers who identified their principals as responders were the least involved in the decision-making process. Teachers who rated their principals as managers (45%) were considered to account for the second largest amount of teacher involvement, following principals identified as initiators.

#### Student Academic Achievement and School Climate

Farr (1998) conducted a study to examine student achievement and school climate perceptions of students and staff over a two-year period from 1994-1996. The study was conducted in the Lexington Public Schools. Participants in the study consisted of 375 Lexington Middle School students and Morton Elementary School students and 66 teachers. The results of the study revealed that the school climate survey data completed by the staff on school climate total mean score decreased by 5.0 percent. There was a decrease in the four subsections of the school climate survey on general school climate: expectations, curriculum, instruction, and discipline. The student school climate total mean score increased with the other four subsections of the school climate survey, increasing in the following areas on the general school climate: expectations, curriculum, instruction, and discipline. There was no significant difference in language scores from



1994-1996. The reading and math NCE mean scores decreased significantly from 1994-1996.

Price (1996) examined the organizational climate and academic achievement of elementary students in the Judson Independent School District in Converse, Texas. Eleven schools participated in the study. The faculty and staff completed the Learning Climate Inventory (LCI) to measure their perceptions of the school's climate. Student academic performance was measured by the results from the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT-6). The results of the study revealed: (1) There was a high positive correlation between organizational climate and the mean achievement scores. The Pearson correlation coefficient .6173 was statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence; (2) There was a positive correlation between organizational climate and the mean achievement scores by grade level; and (3) The mean achievement score of the more open schools was significantly higher compared to the less open schools. These findings contribute to educational research in that they provide statistical empirical and quantifiable data that shows a positive correlation between a positive school climate and academic achievement.

#### Character Education Programs and School Climate

Gresham (1999) conducted a study to evaluate teachers' and students' perceptions of school and classroom climate using pre- and post-tests with the implementation of a character education program. The study was conducted in three fourth grade classrooms for six weeks. The sample consisted of 54 students and three teachers from an African-

American inner-city school in Gadsden, Alabama. The teachers completed a 34-item classroom climate scale and student character questionnaire. Multivariate analysis of variance was used as the quantitative measure for comparing each group's pre- and post-tests. Qualitative results were analyzed after two 45-minute pre- and post-classroom observations. The data revealed a significance statistical difference within the groups for both the teachers' and students' perceptions of the school and classroom climate after implementing the character education program.

#### Level of Implementation of Character Education Programs

Childers (1999) examined if there was a correlation between students' pre- and post- tests results on social and relational aspects of a psychological wellness measure as a result of their participating in a high or low implemented character education program. The mean score for girls who had high and low implementation of character education program had a decrease in student-to-student support. In relation to teacher-to-student support, the scores for girls in the low implementation character education group were significantly lower than the girls in the high implementation character education group.

Lehrer (1997) investigated how character education programs in the Texas Public Elementary Schools were being implemented. Principals and teachers in the school district were surveyed to determine if character education programs were being taught in elementary schools in Texas. The results of the study revealed that most teachers in the Texas Public School System taught some form of character education. Texas Principals saw the need for character education programs to be taught in the schools. The study also

revealed inconsistencies in defining character education and the components of the character education curriculum.

### Student Character Development

Berkowitz and Grych (2000) examined character development in early childhood to provide effective strategies on how to promote character development in early education. Berkowitz and Grych experienced similar problems to other researchers in the field of character education related to the lack of clear empirical operational definitions for character education and valid and reliable instruments for evaluating character development. The researchers reviewed literature on character education and identified five core parenting strategies that foster character development: induction, nurturance and support, demanding, modeling, and democratic family process. Berkowitz and Grych (2000) developed these strategies from educational literature that may be implemented in fostering caring relationships, helping children with emotions, and respecting children.

### Character Education Programs, Character Development, and Student Discipline

Primm (1998) examined the effects of character education on character-related behaviors of elementary students. The study consisted of students in two rural school districts in Missouri. Fifty-five teachers participated in the study. The control groups were comprised of 26 teachers with no character education program in their school district. The experimental group consisted of 29 teachers who had recently implemented a character education program in their school district. The teachers in both experimental

and control groups completed pre-and post-study surveys on the behavioral characteristics of the students. The results of a t-test revealed no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of students who had been exposed to a character education program compared to those students who had not been exposed to a character education program.

Interestingly, Tattner (1998) conducted a study to examine the impact of teaching values of respect and self-control on the behavior of students. The researcher used a student character survey to obtain pre-test and post-test responses from the fifth through eighth grade levels. Two groups participated in the study. The experimental group (grades five and seven) received two, four-week treatments on character education instruction using the Sunburst Communication Character Education Program. The control group (grades six and eight) received no instruction on character education. The results of the study revealed the experimental group demonstrated a significant difference in their perception of respectfulness and self-control as compared to the control group without treatment. The study has implications for schools that implement character education programs, they may have successful academic programs for preparing students to become productive and responsible citizens in society.

Olsen (1995) conducted a study to determine if character education programs at the elementary school level helped children become responsible and respectful. Teachers at the Leverett Elementary School (grades kindergarten through six) were given a survey to complete before and following implementation of the STARS (Strive Together and Reach Success Character Education Program). The students received weekly thirty-minute character education lessons. The teachers perceived the students as improving

significantly in their attitudes and behaviors. The results of the survey indicated most of the areas related to student behaviors improved according to teacher analysis.

In addition to the previous study, Jacobi (1997) conducted a study to explore how a character education program would positively influence the social behavior of students in grades kindergarten through eight. The research study was conducted at Whiteside School in Bellville, Illinois. The character program entitled ARCH was implemented in the local school as part of a state approved grant. The research methodology included the use of two sets of surveys and interviews based on the perceptions of teachers and students. The results of the study indicated that the implementation of a character education program had positively influenced social behavior in primary students. There was little improvement in social behavior for students in six through eight grade.

### Analysis of Research Literature

The research literature presented in this chapter has allowed the researcher to determine after careful analysis and synthesis of the data that little empirical research evidence has been provided to determine that student academic achievement is significantly and positively correlated with the implementation of character education programs with respect to the following variables: level of implementation, student character development, improved student discipline, and principals' leadership style in character education. However, researchers have known for some time that school climate impacts variables such as student achievement and student discipline. There is a lack of operational definitions for determining outcomes on the effects of character education

programs as it relates to student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

Interestingly, the study conducted by Farr (1998) examined student achievement and school climate perceptions of teachers and students over a two-year period from 1994-1996. The results of the study revealed a difference in the rating between teachers and students. Teachers revealed a decrease in subsections of the school climate survey on the following dimension: expectations, curriculum, instruction, and discipline. The students rated the subsections of the school climate survey higher than teachers on the following dimensions: expectations, curriculum, instruction, and discipline. The reading and math NCE mean scores decreased significantly from 1994-1996. The study conducted by Price (1996) also supports research literature that suggests there is a relationship between school climate and student achievement. The current body of research provides a wealth of literature on school climate as it relates to student behavior. However, there is limited research on character education and its relationship to the integration of the following variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, student discipline, and student academic improvement.

The review of research literature suggests that principals and teachers are supportive of the efforts to implement character education programs in local schools. There appears to be a positive correlation between principals' vision, teacher autonomy, and school climate. It has also been suggested that school climate and teacher autonomy

are significantly correlated to student achievement. Teachers' who rate the principals high on consideration with regard to their leadership style also have positive ratings for school climates.

This chapter contains substantial research literature that supports character development in young children as beneficial to developing responsible and productive citizens. However, the literature is not conclusive with respect to the positive impact character education programs have on improving students' social behavior, especially with respect to adolescent students when compared to primary students in elementary school.

### Summary

Research revealed a significant correlation between the principals' and teachers' perceptions on the importance of teaching character education in the schools as part of the curriculum. Teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style showed a positive correlation between high ratings of the principals' leadership style, teacher morale, and the school having a positive school climate. When teachers perceive their principals as initiators or an administrator who models leadership styles that are conducive to the participatory leadership techniques, the teachers tend to be more involved in the decision making practices in the local school. The research reveals that there is a significant statistical difference within groups for teachers' and students' perceptions based on a pre- and post-test of implementing character education in the school. The research also reveals there is a direct correlation between students' pre- and post-test results on scores

on social and relational aspects of psychological wellness measure as a result of participating in high or low implemented character education program. The level of implementation of character education programs (high or low) can impact the social and relational aspects of psychological wellness. The review of literature provided limited research on character education and its relationship to the integration of the following variables: teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, student discipline improvement, and students' academic improvement.



## CHAPTER III

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as related to student academic improvement and discipline. The definitions of the variables are discussed in this chapter, and the hypotheses are presented. Limitations of the study and summary of the theoretical framework are presented. The illustration in Figure 2 represents the independent and dependent variables.

#### Definition of Variables

##### Dependent Variable Student Academic Improvement

The dependent variable, student academic improvement, is defined in the study according to the teachers' perceptions on how well students have made significant improvement in their academic performance or the extent to which students who were below grade level are now performing above grade level as a result of the implementation of the character education program in the local school. (Questionnaire Items: 37-39)

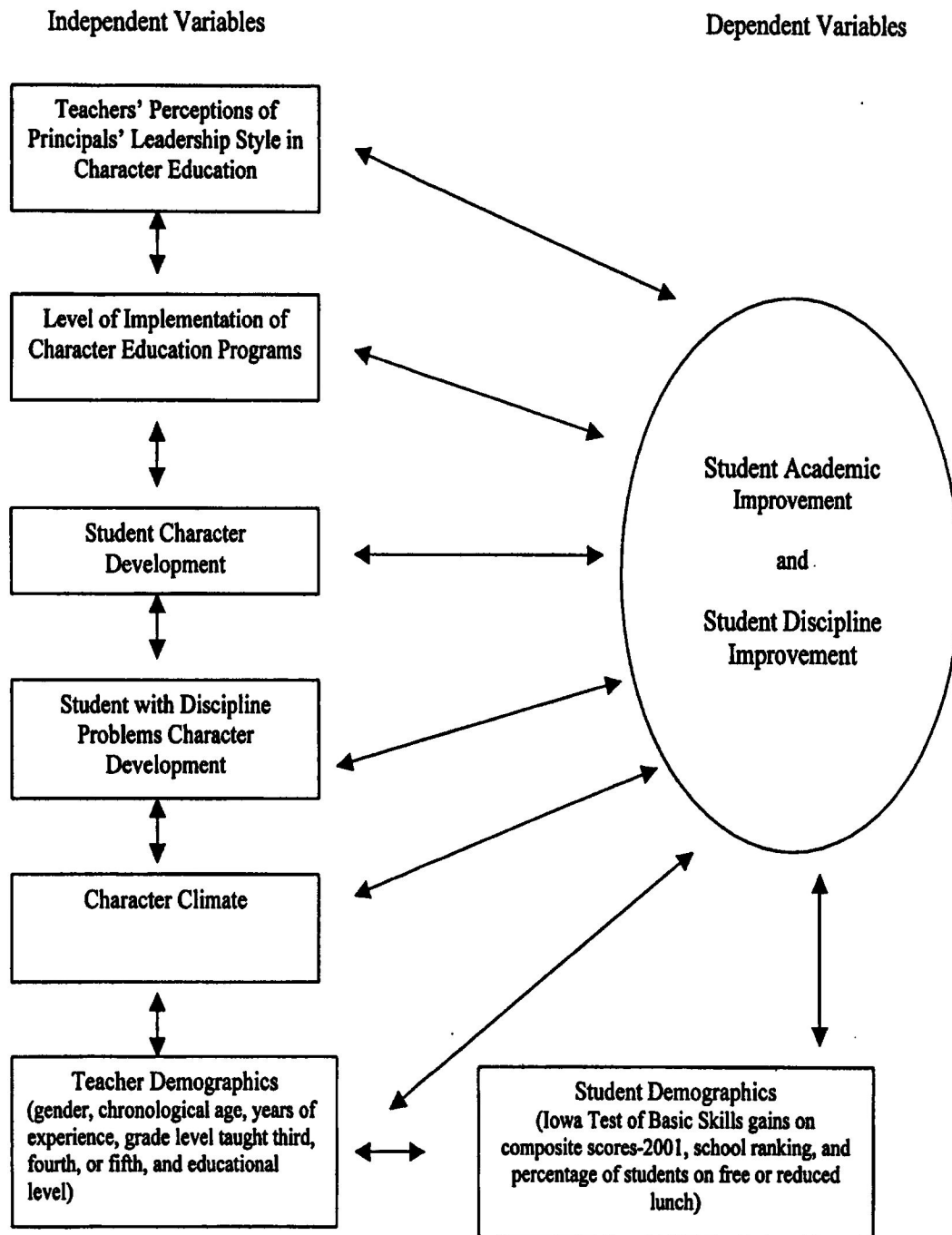


Figure 2. Illustration of Independent and Dependent Variables

### Dependent Variable Student Discipline Improvement

The dependent variable, student discipline improvement, was determined based on how teachers perceived the interactions of faculty to students and the number of discipline referrals or offenses they encountered on a day-to-day basis. (Questionnaire Items: 40-42)

### Independent Variables

#### Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style in Character Education

The Leadership Continuum Model is used to determine the leadership style employed by principals in character education and teachers' perceptions to determine how effective the leadership style is in achieving the goals of implementing a comprehensive character education program and its effects on student achievement. (Questionnaire Items: 19-27)

#### Defining Leadership and Leadership Style

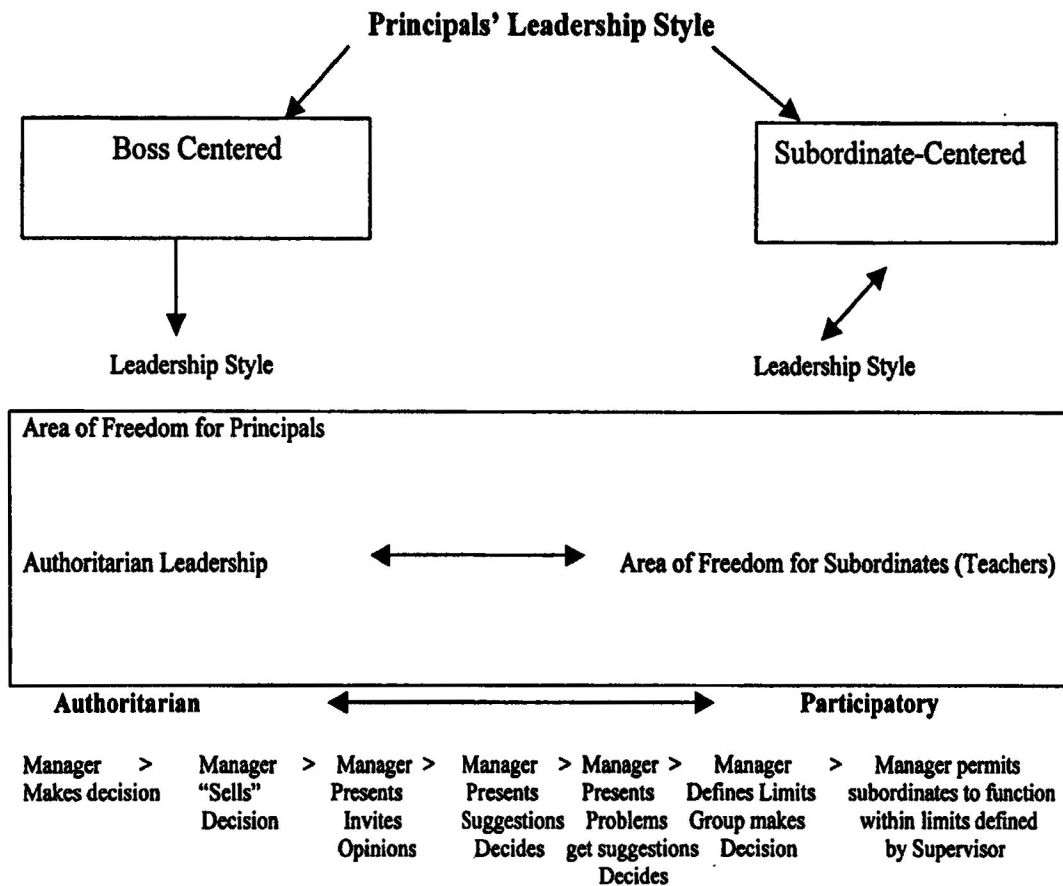
Leadership is defined in this study as the process of influencing a group of people in an organization to develop activities to produce desired results in order to achieve specific goals for implementing a character education program based on the Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt leadership style continuum. (Questionnaire Items: 19-27)

Leadership style is related to the manner in which the leader influences the group to achieve specific goals (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). Robert Tannenbaum and

Warren Schmidt developed a leadership continuum that describes the behaviors of leaders from boss-centered leadership to subordinate-centered leadership represented in Figure 3.

The behaviors on the continuum are identified according to five leadership styles described below: (a) Telling – The leader identifies a problem and then provides a solution by telling the group members what they are expected to do; (b) Selling – The leader makes the decision and then convinces the group members to comply with the choice he or she has made. The group is not allowed to give suggestions or opinions; (c) Testing – The leader identifies a problem and provides a suggestion to solve the problem. The leader seeks input from group members in terms of who is expected to implement the plan; (d) Consulting – The group is involved in the decision making process from the beginning. The leader presents the problem and encourages group members to come up with alternative solutions; and (e) Joining – The leader is an active participant in the dialogue with group members and agrees to make decisions based on the consensus of the group members. Leadership questions are related to implementation of the character education program and Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum.

The leadership styles employed by the leader are based on four categories: forces of the leader, forces in the group, forces in situation, and long-run objectives and strategy. In terms of forces of the leader, the more comfortable the leader feels with individuals sharing in decision making, confidence and security in group members when making decisions the leader will employ the consulting leadership style. The group leader can also permit the group members to experience more autonomy when they demonstrate



**Figure 3. Leadership Style Continuum**

Source: Tannenbaum & Schmidt. (1996). Principals' leadership style. In Lunenburg & Ornstein (Eds.), Educational administration: Concepts and practice (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 141). California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

a high level of competence, experience, and they demonstrate a need for independence.

When leaders are constrained by time limits and lack of time for collaboration, they often result to using more directive leadership styles which involve telling and selling. Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt refer to this as boss-centered leadership (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996).

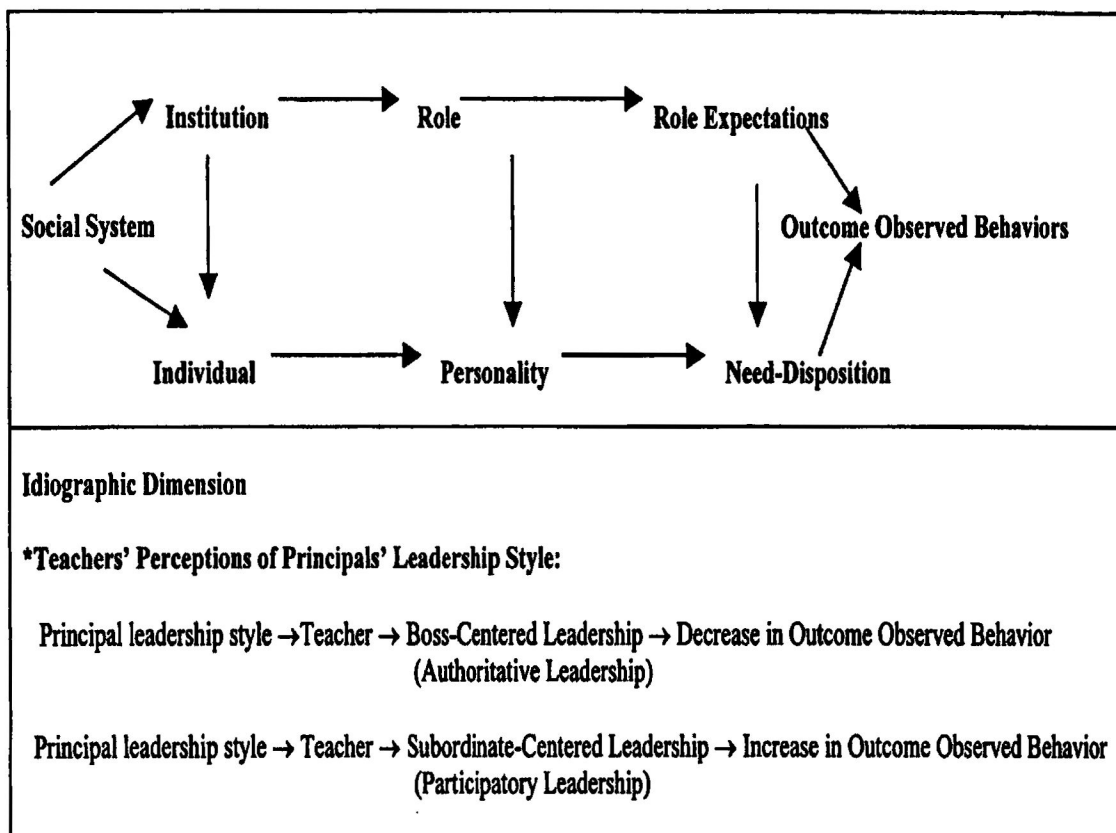
Teachers perceive themselves as more empowered when they share in the decision-making process. When teachers share in the decision making process, they are more likely to be committed to working to achieve the goals of the organization (participatory leadership style or subordinate-centered leadership style).

According to the Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model, the school can be viewed as a social system with individuals affecting the outcomes of the organization represented in Figure 4. The Getzels and Guba Social Systems Model describes how teachers' behavior can be influenced by the role of the organization and role expectations and the personality of the individual as defined by his or her need disposition (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996, p. 53). In other words, the higher the level of congruence between nomothetic dimensions and idiographic dimensions of the social systems model the more likely the organizational goals will be accomplished in terms of teacher behaviors.

#### Level of Implementation Character Education Programs

The independent variable, the level of implementation of character education programs, is determined by the level of consistency employed by teachers, administrators,

*Nomothetic Dimension*



**Figure 4.** Jacob Getzels and Egon Guba School Systems Model: Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style

Source: Getzels & Guba. (1996). Social systems model: Teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style. In Lunenburg & Ornstein (Eds.), Educational administration: Concepts and practices (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 53). California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

and support personnel in teaching and supporting the principles of the character education program throughout the curriculum. (Questionnaire Items: 1-3)

#### Character Climate

Statements in the questionnaire are used to assess the degree to which students have developed an understanding and demonstrated specific character traits such as respect for teachers and classmates and working well with others as they relate to character climate. (Questionnaire Items: 4-18)

#### Student Character Development

Student character development is determined based on the degree to which the students demonstrated the following character traits from the questionnaire: school pride, self-respect, respect for others, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, perseverance, courtesy, and diligence (Questionnaire Items: 28-36). These character traits are focused on through the character program that is taught systematically throughout the school district on a monthly basis.

#### Students with Discipline Problems Character Development

The independent variable, students with discipline problems character development, is determined by the number of referrals to the office of students who were identified by teachers as having discipline problems and the teachers' observation for improvement in the students' character development. (Questionnaire Items: 43-52)



### Teacher Demographics

The teacher demographics for teachers in the questionnaire consist of gender, chronological age, years of experience in education, educational level, and grade level taught (third, fourth or fifth). (Questionnaire Items: 53-57)

### Student Demographics

Student demographics in the study included students' performance on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills based on the gains for composite scores in reading and math for 2001. The 1999 school year was selected because it is the year preceding the system-wide implementation of character education programs. The 2001 academic school year is the first year the county implemented a system-wide character education program. The researcher compared the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Standardized Test composite scores for 1999 and 2001 to determine if there is a relationship between character education programs and student academic improvement. The results from the fourth grade students' composite scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Achievement Test were used to evaluate student academic improvement for elementary students.

The composite score from the fourth grade level of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (2001) was used to rank schools in order from highest to lowest. This was the second dimension of data compiled for the student demographic variable.

The third dimension for compiling data for the student demographic variable was the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch.

### Relationship Among the Variables

Research has revealed that subordinates prefer the democratic leadership style when compared to the authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles based on the Iowa Studies (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). It has also been suggested by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt's model of leadership that subordinates experience more freedom when the leaders allow them to become more involved in the decision making process. The more autonomy and involvement teachers experience in making decisions, the more likely the leader will have success in achieving organizational goals. The assumption is that teachers feel empowered by principals who employ participatory leadership techniques that allow them to be more involved in the decision-making process. Teachers who perceive their principal's leadership style as more subordinate-centered (participatory leadership) will be more committed to helping them achieve organizational goals. Teachers who perceive themselves as having autonomy and sharing in the decision-making process for the implementation of a comprehensive character education program may demonstrate a higher level of implementation and greater consistency in teaching the program. Teachers are more likely to be successful in achieving specific goals of the organization when they perceive the principal as not being confined to hierarchical, bureaucratic, or authoritarian power structures. The more teachers employ consistent and systematic delivery of instruction of character education programs the more successful the program will be in achieving specific goals for improving student discipline; thereby, improving student academic achievement.

### Null Hypotheses

- HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student discipline improvement and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>5</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>6</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and student academic improvement.
- HO<sub>7</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student discipline improvement.
- HO<sub>8</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student discipline improvement.
- HO<sub>9</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student discipline improvement.

- HO<sub>10</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and student discipline improvement.
- HO<sub>11</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and student discipline improvement.
- HO<sub>12</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student academic improvement and students with discipline problems character development.
- HO<sub>13</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and students with discipline problems character development.
- HO<sub>14</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and students with discipline problems character development.
- HO<sub>15</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and students with discipline problems character development.
- HO<sub>16</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and students with discipline problems character development.
- HO<sub>17</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.
- HO<sub>18</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

- HO<sub>19</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.
- HO<sub>20</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and the level of implementation of character education programs.
- HO<sub>21</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and the level of implementation of character education programs.
- HO<sub>22</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and character climate.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are reflected in the small sampling of participants responding to the questionnaire. These results cannot be generalized to large populations. The researcher hopes that the participants in the study answered questions honestly to maintain the integrity of the study. Test scores are based on a comparison from 1999 through 2001. It is unfortunate that the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is no longer being given system-wide at the elementary level for students first through fifth grades. The researcher was unable to use the current test scores from Stanford 9 because the test was given only to specific grade levels (third and fifth grade students at the elementary level). This would not have provided a wide enough sample for evaluation purposes. The Georgia Criterion Reference Competency Tests is given for students in grades first through eight; however, the researcher was not able to compare performance of students on this test

prior to the system-wide implementation of the character education program with current test scores for 2000-2001.

### Summary

The theoretical framework describes the relationship among the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education, the level of implementation of character education programs, student character development, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics (gender, chronological age, educational level, grade level taught, and years of experience), student demographics (Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains for composite scores- 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch), and dependent variables: student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The independent and dependent variables are identified and defined according to items in the questionnaire.

The relationship among the variables in the study suggests that teachers feel more empowered when they share in the decision-making process. Teachers are more likely to be more committed to working to achieve the goals of the organization when they perceive their principals as employing participatory leadership characteristics. The level of commitment that teachers demonstrate with respect to implementing character education programs will be reflected in the climate of the school. It has been suggested that when character education programs are strategically planned and organized with connecting ideas, practicing, and reinforcing concepts to students' knowledge base

students experience success in achieving the goals of the program. The research hypotheses and limitations of the study are presented in this chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The study was designed to examine the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as related to student academic improvement and student discipline. The researcher investigated the implementation of a character education program in an Atlanta metropolitan school district using the responses to a character school climate questionnaire completed by third, fourth and fifth grade teachers employed in 25 elementary schools from a diverse student population. The teachers responded to a questionnaire based on the independent and dependent variables identified in the study. The independent variables were the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, the level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics that included gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught (third, fourth, or fifth grade), and student demographics that included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite score gains in reading and math for 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variables were student academic improvement and



student discipline improvement. Student academic improvement was measured based on teachers' responses to questions regarding students' academic performance in class. The dependent variable, student discipline improvement, was measured by teachers' responses to questionnaire items related to the number of student discipline referrals to the office on a day-to-day basis.

### Research Design

The study was conducted using a survey research design. The researcher developed a character-climate questionnaire to be completed by third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers. The questionnaire consisted of questions on the principal's leadership style, character education programs, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, and students with discipline problems character development, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. The questionnaire also included the following information on teacher demographics: gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, grade level taught third, fourth, and fifth. The researcher compiled student demographic information to obtain a profile of the schools in the study. The student demographic information included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite score gains in reading and math for 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The responses to the questionnaire and supporting student demographic information were collected and the results computed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### Selection of the Population

The research study was conducted in an Atlanta metropolitan school district. The study consisted of 25 elementary schools representing 32% of the elementary schools in the district. Ninety percent of the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in each of the 25 schools responded to a character-climate questionnaire. A total of 214 character-climate questionnaires completed by the teachers were returned to the researcher. The teachers voluntarily participated in the research study based on the permission granted by the local school principals. The researcher used the following procedures to select participants for the study.

The researcher, wishing to conduct the research study on the entire population for elementary schools, contacted 78 principals by letter, requesting permission to conduct research in their respective schools (Appendix A). The 78 schools were not randomly selected, but specifically selected to include the entire population of elementary schools within the local school district. Thirty-five principals returned letters granting the researcher permission to conduct research in their schools. The researcher, following the mandated procedures of the local school district's Department of Research and Evaluation, submitted to the local school district the letters of approval from each principal along with a proposal to conduct research. The researcher, upon receiving approval from the local school district's Department of Research and Evaluation, contacted the 35 principals and the designated person in the school (school counselor) by letter notifying them of the approval to conduct research (Appendix B). The researcher mailed questionnaires to the school counselors to distribute to third, fourth, and fifth

grade teachers for them to complete. The researcher also provided counselors a self-addressed pre-paid postage envelope in which to return the surveys to the researcher by March 1, 2002. The questionnaires were mailed to the local school counselors on February 19, 2002. The researcher received completed questionnaires from 25 elementary schools (32% of the elementary schools in the district) for a total of 214 questionnaires. The 25 elementary schools that returned the questionnaires were ranked according to the fourth grade composite scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the 2001 academic school year. The schools were also evaluated, based on the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch to obtain a general profile of the students within the local school. Information compiled as a general profile on the student population in the 25 schools is represented in Table 1. According to Table 1, five schools had a complete composite score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading and math ranging from 30 to 37 percentile. Six schools had a complete composite score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading and math ranging from 40 to 48 percentile. Five schools had a complete composite score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading and math ranging from 51 to 55 percentile. Four schools had a complete composite score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading and math ranging from 63 to 66 percentile, and five schools had a complete composite score ranging from 71 to 86 percentile. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch ranged from 4% to 96%, according to data provided on the Georgia Public Education Report Card located on the State Department of Education website.

Table 1

Ranking of Elementary Schools Based on the 2001 Composite Scores for the Iowa Test  
of Basic Skills and Percentage of Students on Free or Reduced Lunch

Elementary School	Iowa Test of Basic Skills Composite Score- 2001	Grade Level	Percentage of Students receiving Free or Reduced Lunch
X <sub>1</sub>	30	4	64.1%
X <sub>2</sub>	30	4	96.8%
X <sub>3</sub>	32	4	85.1%
X <sub>4</sub>	33	4	84.8%
X <sub>5</sub>	37	4	93.3%
X <sub>6</sub>	40	4	82.3%
X <sub>7</sub>	41	4	57.2%
X <sub>8</sub>	43	4	72.2%
X <sub>9</sub>	45	4	94.2%
X <sub>10</sub>	48	4	53.4%
X <sub>11</sub>	48	4	80.8%
X <sub>12</sub>	51	4	81.8%
X <sub>13</sub>	52	4	90%
X <sub>14</sub>	53	4	64.1%
X <sub>15</sub>	55	4	41.8%
X <sub>16</sub>	55	4	65.9%
X <sub>17</sub>	63	4	31.9%
X <sub>18</sub>	65	4	16.5%
X <sub>19</sub>	65	4	30.3%
X <sub>20</sub>	66	4	69.3%
X <sub>21</sub>	71	4	36.5%
X <sub>22</sub>	76	4	29.4%
X <sub>23</sub>	83	4	9.5%
X <sub>24</sub>	85	4	4.7%
X <sub>25</sub>	86	4	37.6%

### Working With Human Subjects

The researcher received written permission from local principals and the Department of Research and Evaluation to conduct research in the local school district. Twenty-five elementary schools in an Atlanta metropolitan school district participated in the research study with 214 teachers from the third, fourth, and fifth grade levels responding to a school climate questionnaire developed by the researcher Deborah Cowan and Dr. Ganga Persaud, dissertation committee chairperson. Upon receiving approval from the local principals in 25 elementary schools and the Department of Research and Evaluation, the researcher contacted the principals by letter and the local school counselors to begin the data gathering process. The school counselor was designated by principals as the contact person to distribute and collect surveys. The researcher mailed surveys to the local school counselors on February 19, 2002. The school counselors were requested by letter to distribute the surveys to third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers and return the completed questionnaires to the researcher in a self-addressed pre-paid postage envelope by March 1, 2002. The teachers who voluntarily completed the surveys were afforded anonymity in the research study. The researcher promised to share the findings of the research study with the local school district's Department of Research and Evaluation and the local schools participating in the study.

### Description of the Instrument

The questionnaire consists of items related to the independent and dependent variables identified in the study (Appendix C). The independent variables are the

teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics including gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught- third, fourth, or fifth, and student demographics. Dependent variables are student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

The level of implementation of character education programs is based on the level of consistency employed as a system-wide approach by teachers, administrators, and support personnel in teaching and supporting the principles of the character education program through the curriculum (Questionnaire Items: 1-3). Statements on the questionnaire were used to assess the degree to which students had developed a clear understanding and demonstrated character development as a result of the system-wide implementation of character education programs in the local schools (Questionnaire Items: 4-18).

The questionnaire includes items related to teachers' perceptions on how the principal influences a group of people in an organization to develop activities to produce desired results in order to achieve specific goals with respect to implementing a character education program based on the Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt (1996) Leadership-Style Continuum and the West Point Model for implementing a character education program (Questionnaire Items: 19-27). The following character traits were included in the questionnaire to evaluate student character development: school pride, self-respect, respect for others, cooperation, tolerance, honesty, perseverance, courtesy,

and diligence (Questionnaire Items: 28-36). Students with discipline problems character development were also reflected in the questionnaire (Questionnaire Items: 43-52).

Teacher demographics include gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught- third, fourth, or fifth (Questionnaire Items: 53-57). Student demographic information included a comparison of the composite test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for the 1999 and 2001 academic school years for the students on the fourth grade level was added as part of the collection of data to the questionnaire. The local schools were ranked according to the composite scores for reading and math for fourth grade students on the 2001 Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The percentage of students on free or reduced lunch was also included as a student demographic variable. This information was included in the data collection to provide a general profile of the local schools participating in the study.

The dependent variables were student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The questionnaire also includes items related to student academic improvement for the teachers to respond to as a result of the implementation of the character education programs in the local school (Questionnaire Items: 37-39). Student discipline improvement was based on the number of discipline referrals to the office on a daily basis (Questionnaire Items: 40-42).

A Likert rating scale was used in the questionnaire to determine the participants' responses to specific items in sections I through IV: A- Always, B- Most times, C- Sometimes, D- Rarely, and E- Never or Do Not Know. Section V and VI of the questionnaire likert scale is described as follows: A- All, B- Most, C- Some, D- A Few,

and E– None. Each Likert scale was given a numerical value for rating the items for the computer analysis of collecting data: Sections I through VI: A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2, and E = 1, and the teacher demographics were numerically rated according to the respective number on the questionnaire. Additional information included the comparison of the fourth grade students' composite test scores for 1999 and 2001 academic school years, local school rankings, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The researcher developed the questionnaire based on the problem identified in the study and the independent and dependent variables. The questionnaire format was designed with the conceptualization of the sample population participating in the study and how they would respond to specific items. The questionnaire was comprised of seven sections including teacher demographics and 57 items comprised of the following: Section I: Level of implementation of character education programs, Section II: Impact of character education programs on student, faculty, and administrators behavior related to character climate, Section III: Principal's leadership style in character education and teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style, Section IV: Impact of specific character education traits on student's understanding and demonstrating character development, Section V: Relationship between character education, student academic improvement and student discipline, Section VI: Relationship between the character education program and student discipline, Section VII: Teacher demographics. The questionnaire was constructed using information from literature related to principals'



leadership style and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style based on the Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt (1996) Leadership Continuum. The implementation of character education programs and character traits items in the questionnaire were consistent with the West Point Curriculum for the Character Education Program adopted in the metropolitan school district. Face validity of the instrument was obtained by developing items on the questionnaire that directly related to the independent, dependent variables, research questions, and hypotheses investigated in the study. Experts in the field of research and evaluation on the faculty and staff of Clark Atlanta University reviewed the questionnaire and made revisions to verify the items were commensurate to the operational definitions of the independent and dependent variables based on supporting literature. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient statistical application methodology was used to obtain an estimate of internal consistency and reliability. The results of the item to scale correlation data are represented in Appendix D. According to the data represented in the instrument, the total item to scale correlations using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranged from .8982 to .9680, which indicated a relatively high degree of internal consistency and reliability.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on January 3, 2002 on a group of teachers who were randomly selected by the researcher in four elementary schools that did not participate in the research study. The questionnaire was piloted to determine what revisions were necessary to strengthen it prior to its formal use in the district.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher, Deborah Cowan, Dr. Ganga Persaud, dissertation chair, in consultation with Associate Professor

Dr. Moses Norman and Assistant Professor Dr. Robert Dixon, all members of the faculty and staff in the Department of Educational Leadership at Clark Atlanta University. The questionnaire was reviewed also by the local school district's Department of Research and Evaluation, with no recommendations made for revisions.

### Data Collection

The researcher wrote letters to 78 principals requesting permission to conduct research in their schools. The researcher also submitted a proposal to the local school district for approval to conduct research in those elementary schools. Approval to conduct research in 35 schools was granted by the researcher from the Department of Research and Evaluation in the Atlanta metropolitan local school district. Thirty-five of the 78 principals granted permission for the researcher to conduct research in their schools. The local principals identified a contact person (the school counselor) in each school that would be responsible for distributing the questionnaires and returning them to the researcher. The researcher mailed a letter and the questionnaires to each of the 35 school counselors with specific instructions for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were collected by the school counselors and mailed to the researcher in a self-addressed pre-paid postage envelope. The researcher received completed questionnaires from 25 schools. The researcher obtained from the local school district's Department of Research and Evaluation 1999 and 2001 composite test scores from Iowa Test of Basic Skills Achievement Standardized Tests. The data collected for the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was

obtained from the Georgia Public Education Report Card located on the State Department of Education website. This information was used with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite scores in reading and math to develop a profile of the students in the local schools.

### Statistical Application

A Correlation matrix, which consists of the Pearson correlation coefficients of all the selected variables in the study, was used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Teacher and student demographic data were analyzed using a factor analysis to determine the interrelatedness between the dependent variables and other independent variables in the study. The results of the factor analysis for teacher and student demographics were indicated in a correlation matrix. Regression analyses were used to demonstrate the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variables: student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient method was conducted on each variable using an item to scale correlation to obtain an estimate of internal consistency and reliability.

### Data Analysis

The responses to the questionnaire were tabulated and encoded in the computer for analyses using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). A correlation matrix was developed to show the relationships between the independent and dependent variables in relationship to examining the hypotheses in the study. Regression analyses

were used to estimate the relative contributions of selected variables on dependent variables: student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Delimitations

The study was focused primarily on the elementary schools in the Atlanta metropolitan school district. The goal was to sample as many schools as possible to obtain quantifiable data that could be generalized to the larger population of elementary schools in the school district. The sample of schools was not randomly selected but was based on the approval of principals for their schools to participate in the study. However, the research study consisted of a wide range of schools with composite achievement scores ranging from the thirtieth percentile to the eightieth percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Standardized Test. The following teacher demographics were also considered in the research study: gender, chronological age, educational experience, and grade level taught third, fourth, or fifth. The independent variables were used to evaluate their impact on student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Summary

The study was conducted using a survey research design. Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers from 25 elementary schools voluntarily completed a school climate questionnaire developed by the researcher, Deborah Cowan, Dr. Ganga Persaud, dissertation chair, in consultation with Associate Professor Dr. Moses Norman and Assistant Professor Dr. Robert Dixon, all members of the faculty in the Department of Educational Leadership of the School of Education at Clark Atlanta University. The

questionnaire was pre-tested on January 3, 2002, on 16 teachers randomly selected by the researcher in four elementary schools from the district that did not participate in the research study. The questionnaire was piloted to determine what revisions were necessary to strengthen it prior to its formal use in the district. The local school district gave approval for 35 schools to be involved in the research study.

The questionnaires were mailed to the 35 schools and 25 schools returned completed questionnaires. The data were collected, computed, and analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient statistical application methodology was used to obtain an estimate of internal consistency and reliability. The total item to scale correlations for the variables using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranged from .8982 to .9680, which indicated a high degree of internal consistency and reliability.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as it relates to student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The independent variables were as follows: teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, the level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics that included gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught- third, fourth, or fifth grade, and student demographics that included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite score gains in reading and math for 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variables were student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

#### Pearson Correlation Analysis

The data with respect to the Pearson correlation coefficients and hypotheses are represented in correlation matrix Table 2. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study will be tested based on the following hypotheses.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix: Relationship Between Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	SACAD IMP	STDIS IMP	DISCH IMP	PRN STYLE	CHIMP LEVEL	CHAR CLIM	SCHAR DEV
SACAD IMP	1.000	.717*	.610*	.427*	.434*	.496*	.543*
STDIS IMP	.717*	1.000	.547*	.375*	.269*	.430*	.492*
DISCH IMP	.610*	.547*	1.000	.623*	.504*	.636*	.637*
PRN STYLE	.427*	.375*	.623*	1.000	.662*	.656*	.601*
CHIMP LEV	.434*	.269*	.504*	.662*	1.000	.621*	.556*
CHAR CLIM	.496*	.430*	.636*	.656*	.621*	1.000*	.709*
SCHAR DEV	.543*	.492*	.637*	.601*	.556*	.709*	1.000

\*Significant at .05 Level

SACAD IMP - Student academic improvement

STDIS IMP - Student discipline improvement

DISCH IMP - Students with discipline problems character development

PRIN STYLE - Teacher's perceptions of principals' leadership style

CHIMP LEV - Level of implementation of character education

CHAR CLIM - Character climate

SCHAR DEV - Student character development

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student discipline improvement and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .717 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student discipline improvement and student academic improvement.

This relationship can be explained by the decline in the number of students who were reported to the office for discipline problems with the implementation of the

character education program. The students developed specific character traits that allowed them to become more respectful toward their peers and teachers, as well as attentive in class. The teachers' perceived students as improving in their academic performance when they were attentive and appeared to be motivated to learn in class. Students who are well behaved, respectful, and attentive in class tend to be rated favorably by teachers as performing better academically, compared to students who have not been exposed to a character education program.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .610 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student academic improvement.

The probable reason students with discipline problems improved in their character development is a result of their ability to demonstrate new understanding of character traits through their critical analysis of fictional stories in literature. Students with discipline problems that were able to construct new dimensions of character traits and practice them in class on a consistent basis often are perceived by teachers as improving academically because of their demonstrating pro-social behaviors related to character development and improved attentiveness in class. If there are fewer discipline disruptions created by students in class, the teacher tends to evaluate positively their character



development and their academic performance. On the contrary, students who are consistently disruptive of the classroom environment tend to be rated low by teachers with respect to their character development and student academic improvement. These students' behaviors are often viewed by teachers as not reflective of the character traits that are being taught in character education. Students' behaviors in class directly impacts teachers' perceptions of their character development and academic performance.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .427 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student academic improvement.

This relationship can be explained by teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, as accepting and encouraging which then allows the teachers to feel that their opinions are important and valued. Teachers who believe they share in the decision making process are committed to developing effective strategies for teaching students character education principles. This creates a positive learning environment where students feel a sense of acceptance from teachers and they are actively engaged in the learning process. The principals' leadership style in character education creates a positive character climate where teachers are encouraged to use innovative teaching strategies for developing and implementing character education

programs. The students benefit in an educational environment where the teachers are committed and actively involved in teaching as a result of feeling supported by the principal. Teachers tend to rate favorably student academic improvement when they feel supported and appreciated by principals.

HO<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .434 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student academic improvement.

This relationship can be explained in that character education programs that are consistently taught by teachers afford students the opportunity to develop specific character traits such as respect for others and responsibility. Students who demonstrate high levels of responsibility tend to behave better in class and demonstrate characteristics such as diligence and perseverance. The students demonstrate a commitment to learning as a result of their understanding and demonstrating specific character traits in class. These students tend to perform better academically when compared to students who have not developed character traits such as responsibility, due to lack of involvement in a character education program. Students who are motivated and attentive in class as a result of character education tend to be rated favorably by teachers on student academic improvement.

HO<sub>5</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .496 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between character climate and student academic improvement.

The possible reason character climate has a significant relationship to student academic improvement is because students who are well behaved work well together, and treat classmates with respect tend to create a positive character climate that is conducive to learning. Students who demonstrate respectful behavior toward teachers and students create a learning environment where teachers can teach instructional objectives and encourage student participation in the learning environment, thereby, improving student academic performance.

HO<sub>6</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and student academic improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .543 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student character development and student academic improvement.

This relationship exists because of students who have participated in the teaching of a comprehensive character education program have learned specific character traits such as school pride, self-respect, respect for others, tolerance, honesty, and cooperation to the extent that it has improved their character development. The students are often

perceived as well-behaved, respectful, and cooperative. Teachers' tend to rate these students favorably with respect to student academic improvement when they are attentive and motivated to learn in class. The students who do not provide discipline problems and demonstrate positive character traits in class receive positive ratings by the teachers compared to students who demonstrate a lack of character development. Students, as a result of character education, demonstrate good work habits in school and a higher commitment to academic excellence. Teachers with respect to academic performance often rate students who are not motivated and attentive in class poorly compared to those students who have demonstrated positive character development as a result of character education.

HO<sub>7</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student discipline improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .547 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between students with discipline problems character development and student discipline improvement.

The probable reason for improvement in discipline for students previously identified as having behavioral problems is attributed to their ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and practice character traits in class. The students who were identified with discipline problems character development improved. Student discipline also improved as a result of students' understanding and practicing newly constructed dimensions of

character traits in class and in relation to one another. The students tend to demonstrate effective skills for solving problems and working in cooperative learning groups through character education programs. Students who have not been exposed to character education programs are not afforded the opportunities to model appropriate behaviors that can help them develop specific character traits. The students with discipline problems character development are not improved when there is a lack of exposure to effective character education programs and opportunities are not created for them to construct understanding of character traits that may be modeled in relation to their peers.

HO<sub>8</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student discipline improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .375 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and student discipline improvement.

This relationship exists because teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education when viewed as supportive and encouraging tend to rate students who had discipline problems as improving in their behavior. The teachers are more accepting and willing to work with students when they feel supported and strategies for implementing effective character education programs are supported by the principal. The teachers feel more empowered. Therefore, teachers are willing to develop innovative strategies when working with students. The more innovative strategies they implement

with relation to character development for students the fewer number of student referrals to the office for discipline problems. The more students are perceived by teachers as being well-behaved and attentive in class the more likely they will rate them as improving with respect to student discipline.

HO<sub>9</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student discipline improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .269 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and student discipline improvement.

This relationship exists because character education programs that are consistently taught by teachers afford students the opportunity to analyze and develop an understanding of character traits on a daily basis. Students can observe, model, and construct new dimensions of character traits that may be modeled in school. Students who have acquired the skills to analyze critically and demonstrate character development in their relationship with peers, faculty, and staff demonstrate significant improvement in discipline. Teachers observe students as being better behaved and respectful toward their peers. The teachers tend to rate student discipline as improving when there are fewer referrals to the office for discipline reasons and when the administrators and students are committed to the principles of character education and consistently demonstrate them when interacting with others.

HO<sub>10</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and student discipline improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .430 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between character climate and student discipline improvement.

This relationship can be explained as a result of students learning to solve conflicts without fighting, respecting others' personal property, treating classmates with respect, and working well together to create a positive character climate. Students who attend a school where there is a positive character climate can relate effectively to each other, and tend to behave respectfully toward teachers and administrators. Modeling of positive peer interactions encourages students to practice character traits and improves student discipline with fewer conflicts. Students work well together, help new students, and demonstrate respectful behavior toward others.

HO<sub>11</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and student discipline improvement.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .492 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student character development and student discipline improvement.

This relationship exists because students who demonstrate improvement in character development may have conceptualized and demonstrated specific character traits such as self-respect, respect for others, and cooperation with respect to their

interactions with their peers. The more positive interactions the students demonstrate with respect to their peers the more likely teachers perceive them as improving with student discipline as a result of character education.

HO<sub>12</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student academic improvement and students with discipline problems character development.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .610 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student academic improvement and students with discipline problems character development.

The probable reason students identified as discipline problems character development improved with respect to their academic performance may be attributed to their ability to develop skills to critically analyze and evaluate character traits in literature and practice them in class. Teachers with respect to improved academic performance often favorably rate the students with discipline problems who were able to construct new dimensions of character traits and practice them in class.

HO<sub>13</sub>: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and students with discipline problems character development.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .623 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a



significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education and students with discipline problems character development.

The probable reason for this relationship is when teachers perceive the principals' leadership style in character education as supportive they are willing to try innovative strategies for developing and implementing character education programs. Teachers are more committed to developing effective strategies when working with students that may invariably improve the relationship between students and teachers. The strategies employed by teachers can be helpful in developing effective classroom management techniques that enhance character development in students with discipline problems.

HO<sub>14</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and students with discipline problems character development.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .504 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and students with discipline problems character development.

This relationship can be explained by educators consistently teaching a character education program in school using a system-wide approach that focuses on students developing an understanding of virtues such as respect for others, honesty, and responsibility. Students who are consistently exposed to character education programs and provided opportunities to observe and model character traits are able to construct new dimensions of character traits and practice them in relation to one another. This is a

process that has to be developed through the teaching of comprehensive character education programs. Students tend to not improve in character development as a result of character education programs that are inconsistently taught or in isolation to the curriculum.

HO<sub>15</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and students with discipline problems character development.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .636 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between character climate and students with discipline problems character development.

This relationship exists because students with discipline problems character development is enhanced when students observe positive interactions among their peers and faculty that include: treating others with respect, working well with others, solving conflicts without fighting, and behaving respectfully toward teachers and administrators. The more that students are exposed to positive character climates the more likely they are to begin modeling these behaviors which allows them to develop appropriate behaviors that can attribute to their character development. Students' character development is improved when they demonstrate specific character traits as a result of observing and modeling appropriate behaviors. Teachers perceive the character climate as positive when they observe students demonstrating respectful behavior toward their peers, working well together, and respecting others' personal property. The more teachers

observe these interactions resulting in a positive character climate the more favorably they rate the students with discipline problems character development.

HO<sub>16</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and students with discipline problems character development.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .637 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student character development and students with discipline problems character development.

This relationship can be explained as a result of students with discipline problems developing an ability to critically analyze, evaluate character traits and construct new meanings of character traits that they can practice. Character development is enhanced in these students when they are afforded opportunities to demonstrate and practice character traits in relation to one another. Students who are respectful to teachers and administrators, well-behaved in class, and cooperative tend to relate effectively with others and improve dramatically with respect to student discipline and character development. Teachers' often rate favorably students who were previously identified with discipline problems highly in character development when they demonstrate specific character traits as a result of character education programs.

HO<sub>17</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .662 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between the level of implementation of character education programs and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

This relationship exists because teachers when they perceive the principals' leadership style in character education as encouraging with helping them create strategies for developing and implementing a character education program, they tend to be more consistent with teaching character education. The teachers use a system-wide approach for teaching virtues such as respect for others, honesty, and responsibility to students and provide opportunities for students to critically analyze and evaluate character traits in literature. The students can synthesize the information and apply it in practical situations based on their understanding of newly constructed dimensions of character traits. The more committed and supportive teachers perceive the principal is to implementing a comprehensive character education program the more likely they will be committed to teaching the character education program.

HO<sub>18</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .656 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between character climate and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

This relationship can be explained by teachers who perceive principals as encouraging and supportive of character education programs as responsible for creating a positive character climate. The principals' leadership style in character education encourages students and teachers to be respectful toward each other. Character traits are consistently emphasized and demonstrated in the school to create a positive character climate.

HO<sub>19</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .601 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student character development and teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education.

This relationship exists because student character development is enhanced when teachers perceive the principals' leadership style in character education as one that encourages the faculty to create strategies for developing character education programs and accepts and praises teachers for innovative strategies with character education implementation.

HO<sub>20</sub>: There is no significant relationship between character climate and the level of implementation of character education programs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .621 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a

significant relationship between character climate and the level of implementation of character education programs.

This relationship exists because character education programs that are consistently taught in schools by teachers based on a system-wide approach for teaching specific character traits allow students to develop character traits that creates a positive character climate. A positive character climate is created when students treat classmates with respect and work well together. Schools that consistently implement character education programs create climates where teachers tend to listen to students' problems and students feel they can talk to teachers about things that bother them.

HO<sub>21</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and the level of implementation of character education programs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .556 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a significant relationship between student character development and the level of implementation of character education programs.

This relationship exists because of character education programs that are consistently taught in schools by teachers allows students the opportunity to develop an appreciation and understanding of character traits. Students can practice appropriate ways of demonstrating character traits with respect to their peers and teachers. The more opportunities students are afforded to observe and model character development as a

result of exposure to character education programs the more likely teachers will perceive the students as improving in their character development.

HO<sub>22</sub>: There is no significant relationship between student character development and character climate.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .709 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis is rejected in favor of a relationship between student character development and character climate.

This relationship can be explained when students demonstrate character development with respect to the following traits: school pride, respect for others, self-respect, and cooperation they invariably create a positive character climate. Teachers may observe that students treat classmates with respect; thereby, creating a character climate that is conducive to learning. The more positive interactions the teacher observes between students the more favorable the character climate is rated.

#### Factor Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables

The factor analysis was conducted to determine the level of contribution or relationship among variables in each factor. A factor analysis is a statistical procedure used for placing the variables according to their level of congruence (loading) on inter-relationships into factors of communalities. Therefore, all the variables that are placed in the same factors are considered to be interrelated. The interrelatedness of the variables in the same factors is considered to be stronger than their relationships with variables in other factors. The study consisted of several variables many of which were interrelated in

Table 3

**Factor Analysis of Selected Variables on Character Education, Student Academic Improvement and Student Discipline Improvement**

FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR III	FACTOR IV	FACTOR V
SCHAR DEV (.852)	TAGE (.790)	FRLUNCH (.903)	ITBSGAIN (.809)	GENDER (-.682)
PRN STYLE (.816)	TEXP (.779)	SCHRANK (.817)		TGRADE (.587)
CHIMP LEV (.784)	TEDUC (.673)			
CHAR CLIM (.771)				
DISCH IMP (.765)				
SACAD IMP (.762)				
STDIS IMP (.685)				

**Level of Significance .05**

SCHAR DEV - Student character development

PRIN STYLE - Teacher's perceptions of principals' leadership style

CHIMP LEV - Level of implementation of character education

CHAR CLIM - Character climate

DISCH IMP - Students with discipline problems character development

SACAD IMP - Student academic improvement

STDIS IMP - Student discipline improvement

TAGE- Teacher chronological age

TEXP – Teacher experience

TEDUC – Teacher educational level

FRLUNCH- Free or reduced lunch

SCHRANK – School ranking (ITBS scores-2001)

ITBSGAIN- ITBS scores (1999/2001)

GENDER – Teacher gender

TGRADE- Grade level taught by teacher

the study as indicated in the correlation matrix in Table 3. The Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) computed five factors. Data compiled in the Factor Analysis Table 3 are analyzed according to research questions.

**Research Question 1**

Would the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement be placed in the same factor as the independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character



education, student character development, level of implementation of character education program, character climate, and students with discipline problems character development?

The results of factor analysis indicate that in factor I are placed student character development, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. These variables are tightly bonded and influence each other more as compared to any other variables in the other factors. The answer to the question is yes.

This finding reflects teachers who view their principals' leadership style in character education as supportive and encouraging with implementing the character education program tends to consistently teach character education. Character education programs that are consistently taught emphasizing character development results in a positive character climate with a decline in discipline referrals and thereby improving student academic performance.

#### Research Question 2

Would the teacher demographics variables such as gender, chronological age, years of experience, grade level taught - third, fourth, or fifth - and educational level be placed in the same factor as the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement?

The variables assigned to factor II are teacher demographics such as chronological age, experience, and educational level are closely bonded. The factor coefficients indicate that teacher demographics such as chronological age, experience, and educational level have no statistical relationship on student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. Factor V was assigned the teacher demographic variables gender and grade level taught. The answer to the question is no. The teacher demographics are not placed in the same factor as student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

It appears that teacher demographics have little influence on student academic improvement and student discipline improvement with regard to other independent variables such as level of implementation of character education program, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, character climate, and student character development.

### Research Question 3

Would the student demographic variables such as Iowa Test of Basic Skill gains for reading and math composite scores-2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch be in the same factor as the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement?

The results indicate that the student demographic variables are not placed with the dependent variables student academic improvement and discipline improvement in

Factor I. Free or reduced lunch and school ranking were assigned to factor III. Factor IV consisted of the gains from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills Test. Student demographic variables have no influence on the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. The answer to the question is no.

This finding reflects that students' socio-economic level and performance on standardized tests do not relate to the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. Character education programs that are consistently taught, emphasizing character development, result in a positive character climate with a decline in discipline referrals and thereby improving student discipline and student academic performance.

### Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted on the dependent variable student discipline improvement and the results are reflected in Table 4.

In the regression analyses tables, the standard coefficients are used to provide the independent contributions on each variable. In Table 4 with respect to the dependent variable student discipline improvement, the Beta coefficient for student academic improvement is .666 and a t-value of 6.998 (calculated probability level is .000), that is significant at the .05 level. This indicates as students improve in student discipline then student academic performance improves. It appears that the only contributing variable to student discipline improvement is student academic improvement. The regression

Table 4

Regression Analysis for Student Discipline Improvement

Variables	Standard Coefficient		
	Beta	t	Sig.
SACADIMP	.666	6.998	.000*
CHIMPLEV	-.158	-1.599	.114
CHARCLIM	-.101	-.817	.417
PRNSTYLE	.201	1.835	.070
SCHARDEV	.161	1.310	.194
DISCHIMP	.046	.465	.643
ITBSGAIN	-.046	-.555	.580
TGRADE	.090	1.257	.213
GENDER	-.096	-1.334	.186
TAGE	-.065	-.775	.441
TEDUC	.001	.015	.988
TEXP	.056	.606	.546
FRLUNCH	.003	.029	.977
SCHRANK	-0.24	.227	.821

\*Denotes .05 level of Significance

R = .811      R Square = .658      Adjusted R Square = .597      Std. Error of Estimate = .7050

SACADIMP - Student academic improvement

ITBSGAIN - ITBS scores (1999/2001)

CHIMPLEV - Level of implementation of character education

TGRADE- Grade level taught by teacher

CHARCLIM - Character climate

GENDER – Teacher gender

PRNSTYLE - Teacher's perceptions of principals' leadership style

TAGE- Teacher chronological age

SCHARDEV - Student character development

TEDUC – Teacher educational level

DISCHIMP - Students with discipline problems character development

TEXP – Teacher experience

FRLUNCH- Free or reduced lunch

SCHRANK – School ranking (ITBS scores-2001)

analysis revealed student academic improvement as the only variable contributing to student discipline improvement at the .05 level of significance.

The regression analysis for dependent variable student academic improvement is reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

Regression Analysis for Student Academic Improvement

Variables	Standard Coefficient		Sig.
	ts Beta	t	
STDISIMP	.575	6.998	.000*
CHIMPLEV	.208	2.297	.024*
SCHARDEV	.221	1.957	.054
CHARCLIM	-.114	-.987	.326
PRNSTYLE	-.090	-.869	.388
DISCHIMP	.161	1.772	.080
ITBSGAIN	-.051	-.669	.505
TGRADE	.021	.312	.756
GENDER	-.024	-.353	.725
TAGE	.008	.104	.918
TEDU	-.019	-.275	.784
TEXP	.058	.678	.500
FRLUNCH	.035	.413	.681
SCHRANK	-.052	-.527	.600

\*Denotes .05 level of Significance

R = .839      R Square = 0.705      Adjusted R Square = .652      Std. Error of Estimate = 0.5612

STDISIMP - Student discipline improvement

CHIMPLEV - Level of implementation of character education

SCHARDEV - Student character development

CHARCLIM - Character climate

PRIN STYLE - Teacher's perceptions of principals' leadership style

DISCHIMP - Students with discipline problems character development

ITBSGAIN- ITBS scores (1999/2001)

TGRADE- Grade level taught by teacher

GENDER – Teacher gender

TAGE- Teacher chronological age

TEDUC – Teacher educational level

TEXP – Teacher experience

FRLUNCH- Free or reduced lunch

SCHRANK – School ranking (ITBS scores-2001)

The Beta coefficient for student discipline improvement is .575 and a t-value of 6.998 (calculated probability level is .000), which is significant at the .05 level. This suggests that when student discipline improves, teachers often rate students favorably with respect to student academic improvement. The Beta coefficient for character implementation level is .208 and a t-value of 2.297 (calculated probability level is .024), which is significant at the .05 level. The level of implementation of character education programs is correlated to teachers' rating with respect to students academic performance. Teachers who observe high implementation of character education programs in schools rate student academic improvement favorably, compared to teachers who observe low levels of implementation with respect to character education programs. This finding suggests that the more students are exposed to character education, the more likely they will develop affective behaviors that improve student discipline; thereby, improving student academic performance. The teachers' perception of character education programs can be described as an observable interrelated relationship between student discipline improvement and student academic improvement.

### Analysis of Results

The study revealed a statistically significant relationship based on a factor analysis among the following variables: student character development, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems and character development, character climate, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement.

The results of the study are significant in that it shows a correlation among principals' leadership style, student character development, and the level of implementation of character education programs as it relates to student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

The data indicated that ITBS GAINS (1999-2001) were not statistically significant when compared to the following variables: student character development, teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style, character education level of implementation, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. The factor analysis loaded ITBS GAINS in factor IV. The researcher acknowledges the use of ITBS GAINS in the study as a limitation, due to the lack of comparison on ITBS test scores for 2002. The ITBS test in the metropolitan school district has been replaced with the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (GCRCT). However, the teacher questionnaire items on student academic improvement did reveal a significant relationship with the other variables in factor I. This study supports the results of a study conducted by Childers (1999) that suggests the level of implementation of character education programs (low or high) can impact social and relational aspects of psychological wellness. The level of implementation of character education programs reflects a significant relationship on character climate within the local schools. Teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style (high ratings) also indicate a positive correlation on character climate. The factor analysis revealed a strong interrelated relationship among character climate, level of implementation of character education

programs, students with discipline problems character development, student character development with respect to dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

The regression analysis for the dependent variable student discipline improvement demonstrated positive Beta coefficients for student academic improvement at the .05 level of significance. The regression analysis for student academic improvement revealed positive Beta coefficients at the .05 level of significance for the following variables: student discipline improvement and level of implementation of character education programs.

### Summary

The statistical analysis of the data with respect to the hypotheses and interrelated relationship between the independent and dependent variables was discussed in the chapter. The significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables were tested using a Pearson R coefficient correlation matrix. There was a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style and student academic improvement. The study revealed a significant relationship between student character development and student academic improvement. There was a significant relationship between the levels of implementation of character education programs and student character development. There was also a significant relationship between student character development and student discipline improvement.



The results of the factor analysis demonstrated a strong interrelated relationship among the following variables in factor I: student character development, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. The variables are interrelated and influence each other more when compared to any other variables in other factors. Teachers' demographics such as chronological age, experience, and educational level were closely bonded in factor II. Students receiving free or reduced lunch and the school ranking were assigned to factor III. Factor IV consisted of gains from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

The regression analysis for the dependent variable, student discipline improvement, demonstrated a positive Beta coefficient for student academic improvement at the .05 level of significance. The regression analysis for student academic improvement revealed positive Beta coefficients at the .05 level of significance for the following variables: student discipline improvement and level of implementation of character education programs.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and the level of implementation of character education programs as it relates to student academic improvement and discipline. The researcher investigated the implementation of a character education program in an Atlanta metropolitan school district using the responses to a character climate questionnaire from third, fourth and fifth grade teachers employed in 25 elementary schools from a diverse student population. The teachers responded to a questionnaire based on the independent and dependent variables identified in the study. The independent variables were the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, the level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics that included gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught (third, fourth, or fifth grade), and student demographics that included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains in reading and math composite scores for 2001, school ranking, and

percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variables were student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Findings

The results of the study revealed a significant interrelated positive relationship based on a factor analysis statistical procedure for the following variables in factor 1: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, character climate, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement.

It is interesting to note in the study that teacher demographics were not inter-related to dependent variables on student academic improvement and student discipline improvement. Regression analysis for the dependent variable student discipline improvement revealed a positive Beta coefficient (.666) that was significant at the .05 level of significance, with respect to student academic improvement.

The regression analysis statistical procedure conducted for student academic improvement had significant Beta coefficients (.575 and .208) at the .05 level of significance with respect to the following variables: student discipline improvement and level of implementation of character education programs. Pearson correlation coefficients for the dependent variables student academic improvement and student discipline improvement were significant at the .05 level with respect to the following independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character

education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, and character climate. The results of the study provide statistical evidence that the following variables - student character development, teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, and character climate - are interrelated to improvement in student academic improvement and student discipline improvement.

### Conclusion

The results of the study are conclusive with respect to the following variables being interrelated based on the factorial analysis: student character development, teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, character climate, student academic improvement, and student discipline improvement. These variables are interdependent, which means that they are more effective when they are implemented simultaneously. There must be an effort to integrate these variables to ensure that effective outcomes are achieved with respect to improving character education, student academic performance, and student discipline.

The regression analysis revealed a positive Beta coefficient (.666), that is significant at the .05 level for student discipline improvement and student academic improvement. The regression analysis for student academic improvement had a positive Beta coefficient (.208) that is significant at the .05 level for the implementation of

character education programs. The higher the level of implementation of character education programs the more teachers tend to rate students as improving with respect to their academic performance. Teacher and student demographics had no significant relationship to student academic improvement, student discipline improvement, and level of implementation of character education programs.

### Implications

The synthesis of the data seems to support the theoretical framework of the study which recognizes the leadership style of the principal as vital to the effectiveness of the organization with respect to the implementation of a comprehensive character education program. The theoretical paradigm reflects the level of congruence that may be distinguishable between teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style and its impact on the climate of the organization. The perception of the principals' leadership style in character education can be critical to influencing the teachers' effectiveness with implementing a comprehensive character education. A Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education and character climate. The study also supports research that recognizes the positive relationship between character climate and student academic achievement. Several studies have provided sufficient data on factors that contribute to student character development in high achieving schools. Among those included are positive pupil-teacher interaction, well-structured and positive school climate, and open communication between parents and community. There is no question

that character education programs when effectively implemented can positively impact the school climate.

Thomas Lickona, a proponent of character education programs, asserts that character education programs are essential to building good character in students. There are three compelling reasons why character education programs should be consistently implemented in local schools according to Lickona (1996):

The first is that we need good character to be fully human...A second reason schools are better places--certainly more conducive to teaching and learning when they are civil and caring human communities... and a third reason, character education is essential to building a moral society. (Lickona, 1996, p. 4)

Educators can no longer ignore the need to address character education. School districts across the nation must take the initiative to evaluate practices, policies, and take corrective action to ensure that character education is cultivated in the schools.

Character education should not be seen as an innovative solution to a new problem of educating children for civility and moral maturity. Rather, character education is a return to what has been our traditional responsibility as teachers to open up to the young our best understanding of what constitutes a good life and how to attain it. (Ryan, 1996, p. 81)

### Recommendations

The results of the study revealed according to the factorial analysis that the following variables are tightly bonded or interrelated in factor I: teacher perceptions of the principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, student with discipline problems character development, student discipline improvement, and student academic improvement. The following recommendations for developing school practices, policies, and evaluation of comprehensive character education programs will be based on the significant results of the study.

The principals' leadership style and teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership style are vital to the success of implementing effective character education programs. Principals whose highest priority is building character development for students create a school environment that promotes moral, social, intellectual, and academic achievement. The Principal can support the implementation of comprehensive character education programs by demonstrating the following leadership characteristics:

1. Support teacher ownership and commitment to the implementation of a comprehensive character education program.
2. Provide explanations, elaboration, and consistent reinforcement for faculty and staff to encourage student participation in the character education program.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking skills and opportunities for students to actively participate in caring communities and service learning projects by allowing

students real world experiences for character development inside and outside of the local school.

4. Support comprehensive and consistent evaluation of the character education program as it relates to its infusion in all aspects of the school culture.

(Appendix F- Developed by Deborah Cowan and Dr. Ganga Persaud)

5. Support the creation of a mission statement and a student handbook that address character development within the local school.

The grade level chairpersons and character education committee members can be beneficial to improving student character development and the level of implementation of character education programs in the local schools. Similarly, grade level chairpersons and character education committee chairperson can coordinate the following activities with respect to implementing character education programs.

1. Establish opportunities for collaboration to take place between the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, grade level chairs, and the character education committee in the local schools. This can be beneficial for developing teaching strategies and techniques for assisting teachers with developing techniques for integrating character education into instructional lessons. The researcher suggests that character education lessons can be highlighted through literature and can provide valuable lessons on helping students develop pro-social values. Character developed instructional lessons can provide opportunities to help students demonstrate cooperative learning, respect and understanding for others, and developmental discipline.



2. Conduct annual staff meetings to update teachers on the developments and progress being made with the character education program. Keep parents and community abreast of character education programs in the local school on a regular basis.
3. Monitor the character education program to determine if the strategies are being implemented and solicit feedback from faculty and staff regarding the effectiveness of the program.
4. Develop a Parent-to-School Partnership Contract for promoting student character development.
5. Encourage parents and students to participate in service learning projects.  
Develop a project where parents and students can use real experiences inside and outside of the local school to demonstrate character developmental traits.

Recommendations for supporting character climate, student discipline improvement, and student academic improvement:

1. Encourage grade level chairpersons and teacher support specialists to become actively involved in coordinating and developing effective strategies for training teachers on techniques to teach students based on their learning styles and developing effective classroom management procedures to improve student academic performance and student discipline.

2. Support local staff development and training for faculty and staff that promotes techniques for teaching and integrating character education programs in the curriculum.
3. Promote and encourage mentoring, peer mediation, and counseling programs that support the teaching of character traits such as respect for others, honesty, and responsibility with respect to improving the character climate in the local school.

### Summary

The researcher investigated the implementation of a character education program in an Atlanta metropolitan school district using the responses to a character climate questionnaire from third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers employed in 25 elementary schools from a diverse student population. The teachers responded to a questionnaire based on the independent and dependent variables identified in the study. The independent variables were the teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, the level of implementation of character education programs, character climate, students with discipline problems character development, teacher demographics that included gender, chronological age, educational level, years of experience, and grade level taught (third, fourth, or fifth grade), and student demographics that included the Iowa Test of Basic Skills gains in reading and math composite scores for 2001, school ranking, and percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The dependent variables were student academic improvement

and student discipline improvement. The findings of the study revealed a significant interrelated positive relationship between dependent variables for student academic improvement and student discipline improvement with relation to the following independent variables: teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership style in character education, student character development, level of implementation of character education programs, students with discipline problems character development, and character climate. These independent and dependent variables were placed in factor I according to a factor analysis. Implications of the study are reported in this chapter and recommendations for administrators, teachers, and parents are included for implementation of a comprehensive character education program based on best practices, policies, and evaluation procedures.

## APPENDIX A

## Researcher's Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Research in the Local School

**January 4, 2002**

**Dear Principal,**

I am pleased to inform you that your school has been selected to participate in a study to evaluate the impact of character education programs in public schools. I am requesting your permission for your school to take part in this study, upon the approval of the DeKalb County School System's Research and Evaluation Department. The study will involve a brief survey being completed by all third, fourth and fifth grade homeroom teachers in your school. The survey will take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

In an effort to ensure that the survey is distributed to third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers and completed in a timely manner, I am requesting that you designate a person who will be responsible for distributing and collecting the survey upon delivery of the survey to your local school. I would like to recommend that your counselor be considered as the designated person for distributing and collecting the surveys. It has been my experience as a counselor in the school system that the counselors provide a great resource in disseminating and collecting information from employees in a timely and positive manner. I am sure that the counselor as the designated person will be an invaluable resource to expedite time in the collection of data for the study.

**I look forward to your support and cooperation as a participating school in this study. If you would like for your school to take part in this study, please sign the form below and the enclosed local site research approval form and return them to me in the self-addressed envelope by January 18, 2002. Please feel free to contact me at (770) 808-5673 if you have any questions pertaining to the study. Thank you for your support.**

Sincerely,

**Ms. Deborah Cowan, Ed.S.**

[illegible]

### Researcher's Form for Approval to Conduct Research

The principal's signature is giving consent authorizing the researcher to conduct research at the local school upon approval of the DeKalb School System's Research and Evaluation Department. The person identified by the principal has been designated to disseminate and collect all surveys and return to the researcher.

<b>Principal's Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name of School/Site</b>
<b>Name of Designated Person:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	

## APPENDIX B

### Researcher's Letter to Distribute Surveys and Conduct Research in Local Schools

February 15, 2002

Dear Counselor,

I have recently received approval from the DeKalb County Department of Research and Evaluation to conduct a study in your school to meet partial requirements for my Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership. Your principal has indicated that you will be the designated person assigned to distribute and collect the surveys from the third, fourth and fifth grade teachers and return them to me by mail with the enclosed self-addressed envelope. **Thank you for agreeing to serve as the contact person for assisting me in distributing and collecting my surveys to the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers in your school.**

In an effort to expedite time, please distribute the enclosed surveys and encourage your teachers to complete the surveys as soon as possible (2-3 day time span). Once all the teachers have completed the surveys and you have collected them, place the surveys and those not used in the self-addressed envelope with the information below and mail it from your local school to me.

I am also requesting information at the bottom of this letter that would assist me in compiling data for the surveys issued in each school. Please take a moment to complete the information below and send it along with the surveys in the self-addressed envelope. I appreciate whatever assistance that you have provided in an effort to help me collect the surveys in a timely manner. In the event that the teachers may have questions or concerns regarding the survey, please have them contact me at (770) 939-7115, (work number) or (770) 808-5673, (home number).

Sincerely,

Deborah Mignon Cowan

\*\*\*\*\*

Please return with the teachers completed surveys in the self-addressed envelope by March 1, 2002

Please verify information using the checklist below:

1. Did the teachers complete the entire survey? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
2. Identify the number of teachers for each grade level: Third grade \_\_\_ Fourth grade \_\_\_ Fifth grade \_\_\_
3. Identify the number of teachers for each grade level that completed and submitted a survey:  
Third grade \_\_\_ Fourth grade \_\_\_ Fifth grade \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Contact Person/ Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

cc: Principal

## APPENDIX C

### Survey Instrument

#### **Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style and the Level of Implementation of Character Education Programs as Related to Student Academic Improvement and Discipline**

Please respond to each item by placing a check in the box that best describes how often you see the behavior demonstrated in your school. Please use the scale below when responding to the questionnaire. Thank you for your assistance.

**Scale: A = Always    B= Most times    C= Sometimes    D= Rarely    E= Never or Do not Know**

	Statements:	A	B	C	D	E
	<b>I: With respect to the implementation of the Character Education Program in the school.</b>					
	1. Character education is consistently taught in school by teachers based on a system-wide approach for teaching virtues such as respect for others, honesty, and responsibility.					
	2. The administrators, teachers, and students are actively involved in implementing a comprehensive character education program on a daily basis.					
	3. The administrators, teachers, and students are committed to the principles of character education and demonstrate them consistently when interacting with others.					
	<b>II: As a result of the Character Education Program, as compared to the beginning of the year, there is a significant improvement on each of the following:</b>					
	4. Students treat classmates and schoolmates with respect.					
	5. Students respect others' personal property.					
	6. Students behave respectfully toward teachers and administrators.					
	7. Students work well together.					

	Statements:	A	B	C	D	E
	8. Students solve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.					
	9. Students help new students make friends and feel accepted.					
	10. Teachers listen to students' problems and students feel they can talk to teachers about things that bother them.					
	11. In their relations with each other, the staff displays the character qualities the school is trying to teach.					
	12. In their relations with students, administrators and teachers display the character qualities the school is trying to teach.					
	13. The school treats parents in a way that makes them feel respected, welcomed, and cared about.					
	14. Parents support and work with the school.					
	15. Students can identify positive characteristics about themselves.					
	16. Students can identify personal interests, abilities, and strengths.					
	17. Students can describe how positive characteristics impact school and family situations.					
	18. Students can make good decisions when encouraged by peer pressure to make wrong decisions.					
	<b>III: To what extent would you say the principal, or higher authority</b>					
	19. Makes the decision to introduce character education and requires the faculty implement.					
	20. Presents the decision to implement character education, and justifies the program as relevant.					
	21. Presents the character education program, and asks the faculty how best to implement it, but requires that it is implemented according to the West Point Model.					
	22. Encourages faculty to create their own strategies for developing and implementing the character education program.					
	23. Accepts and praises teachers' innovative strategies for developing and implementing the character education program.					
	24. Supports and accepts the opinions of the faculty in relation to achieving goals to promote student achievement and/or to create a positive learning environment.					
	25. Encourages and promotes the training of staff in order to promote character education in the school.					
	26. Engages teachers in discussions on the importance of implementing character education in the school.					

	Statements:	A	B	C	D	E
	27. Reviews and checks that teachers are committed and actively involved in teaching character education programs as part of the curriculum.					

		A	B	C	D	E
	<b>IV. As a result of the Character Education Program, students in my class as compared to the beginning of the school year have made significant gains in the following:</b>					
	28. School pride.					
	29. Self-respect.					
	30. Respect for others.					
	31. Cooperation.					
	32. Tolerance.					
	33. Honesty.					
	34. Perseverance.					
	35. Courtesy.					
	36. Diligence.					

**In this section please use the following scale for your responses.**

**Scale: A = All      B= Most      C= Some      D= A Few      E= None**

		A	B	C	D	E
	<b>V. As a result of the character education program, how many students in your class as compared to the beginning of the school year:</b>					
	37. Have made significant improvement in their academic performance?					
	38. Who were below grade level are now performing above grade level?					
	39. Who had a lack of motivation to learn have now improved significantly?					
	40. Who were repeatedly referred to the office were no longer being referred to the office?					
	41. Who had discipline problems have improved their behavior significantly to the level of well-behaved students?					
	42. Who had attendance problems have improved their attendance pattern to that of regularly attended students?					
	<b>VI. In your opinion, how many students who were discipline problem cases in your class:</b>					
	43. Demonstrate understanding of the definition of the character trait as written on the board each morning?					



	A	B	C	D	E
44. Enjoyed writing about the definition of the character trait?					
45. Have been able to practice the definition of the character trait in class in relation to one another?					
46. Have both identified and practiced several ways of demonstrating the definition of the character trait?					
47. Critically analyzed and evaluated how effective they were in practicing the definition of the character trait?					
48. Critically analyzed and evaluated how effective teachers and/or their parents practiced the definition of the character trait?					
49. Read and critically analyzed and evaluated the story of a person who practiced the character trait?					
50. Read and critically analyzed and evaluated a fictional story that demonstrated the character trait?					
51. Have responded in a critically analytical and evaluative way to teacher's reading about the character trait in a story in literature?					
52. Have constructed new dimensions of character traits that they could practice?					

### Demographics:

53. Select One: 1= Third Grade Teacher    2 = Fourth Grade Teacher    3= Fifth Grade Teacher

54. Select Gender:    1= Male        2 = Female

55. Select One Age Level: 1= 21-25    2 = 26-30    3 = 31-35    4 = 36 or more

56. Select Education Level: 1= BA or less than MA    2 = MA or more courses    3 = Ed.S. or more courses

57. Select Years of Experience in Education: 1 = 1-3 years    2 = 4 - 6 years    3 = 7 or more years

## APPENDIX D

### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

	<b>ITEMS:</b>	<b>SCALE (CHIMPLEV)</b> Level of implementation of character education programs
	<b>I: With respect to the implementation of the Character Education Program in the school.</b>	
	1. Character education is consistently taught in school by teachers based on a system-wide approach for teaching virtues such as respect for others, honesty, and responsibility.	<b>.915</b>
	2. The administrators, teachers, and students are actively involved in implementing a comprehensive character education program on a daily basis.	<b>.927</b>
	3. The administrators, teachers, and students are committed to the principles of character education and demonstrate them consistently when interacting with others.	<b>.877</b>
	<b>Cronbach Reliability Coefficient (CHIMPLEV) / Total Items (3)</b>	<b>.8986</b>
	<b>II: As a result of the Character Education Program, as compared to the beginning of the year, there is a significant improvement on each of the following:</b>	<b>SCALE (CHARCLIM)</b> Character Climate
	4. Students treat classmates and schoolmates with respect.	<b>.779</b>
	5. Students respect others' personal property.	<b>.774</b>
	6. Students behave respectfully toward teachers and administrators.	<b>.774</b>
	7. Students work well together.	<b>.785</b>
	8. Students solve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	<b>.780</b>
	9. Students help new students make friends and feel accepted.	<b>.743</b>
	10. Teachers listen to students' problems and students feel they can talk to teachers about things that bother them.	<b>.666</b>

11. In their relations with each other, the staff displays the character qualities the school is trying to teach.	.722
12. In their relations with students, administrators and teachers display the character qualities the school is trying to teach.	.695
13. The school treats parents in a way that makes them feel respected, welcomed, and cared about.	.544
14. Parents support and work with the school.	.696
<b>ITEMS:</b>	<b>SCALE:</b> (CHARCLIM) Character Climate
15. Students can identify positive characteristics about themselves.	.728
16. Students can identify personal interests, abilities, and strengths.	.720
17. Students can describe how positive characteristics impact school and family situations.	.721
18. Students can make good decisions when encouraged by peer pressure to make wrong decisions.	.678
<b>Cronbach reliability coefficient (CHARCLIM) / Total Items (15)</b>	<b>.9344</b>
<b>III: To what extent would you say the principal, or higher authority</b>	<b>SCALE: (PRNSTYLE)</b> Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership style
19. Makes the decision to introduce character education and requires the faculty implement.	.798
20. Presents the decision to implement character education, and justifies the program as relevant.	.817
21. Presents the character education program, and asks the faculty how best to implement it, but requires that it is implemented according to the West Point Model.	.799
22. Encourages faculty to create their own strategies for developing and implementing the character education program.	.801
23. Accepts and praises teachers' innovative strategies for developing and implementing the character education program.	.846
24. Supports and accepts the opinions of the faculty in relation to achieving goals to promote student achievement and/or to create a positive learning environment.	.789
25. Encourages and promotes the training of staff in order to promote character education in the school.	.884
26. Engages teachers in discussions on the importance of implementing character education in the school.	.880
27. Reviews and checks that teachers are committed and actively involved in teaching character education programs as part of the curriculum.	.844
<b>Cronbach reliability coefficient (PRNSTYLE) / Total Items (9)</b>	<b>.9450</b>

ITEMS	SCALE: (SCHARDEV) Student character development
<b>IV. As a result of the Character Education Program, <u>students in my class as compared to the beginning of the school year have made significant gains in the following:</u></b>	
28. School pride.	<b>.854</b>
29. Self-respect.	<b>.848</b>
30. Respect for others.	<b>.896</b>
31. Cooperation.	<b>.892</b>
32. Tolerance.	<b>.894</b>
33. Honesty.	<b>.900</b>
34. Perseverance.	<b>.880</b>
35. Courtesy.	<b>.872</b>
36. Diligence.	<b>.874</b>
<b>Cronbach reliability coefficient (SCHARDEV) / total items (9)</b>	<b>.9586</b>

ITEMS	SCALE: (SACAD) Student Academic Improvement
<b>V. As a result of the character education program, how many students in your class as compared to the beginning of the school year:</b>	
37. Have made significant improvement in their academic performance?	<b>.862</b>
38. Who were below grade level are now performing above grade level?	<b>.862</b>
39. Who had a lack of motivation to learn have now improved significantly?	<b>.912</b>
<b>Cronbach reliability coefficient (SACAD) / Total items (3)</b>	<b>.8982</b>
ITEMS	SCALE: (STDISIMP) Student discipline improvement
40. Who were repeatedly referred to the office were no longer being referred to the office?	<b>.922</b>
41. Who had discipline problems have improved their behavior significantly to the level of well-behaved students?	<b>.921</b>
42. Who had attendance problems have improved their attendance pattern to that of regularly attended students?	<b>.881</b>

	<b>SCALE: (DISCHIMP) ITEMS</b>	Students with discipline problems character development
	<b><u>VI. In your opinion, how many students who were discipline problem cases in your class:</u></b>	
	43. Demonstrate understanding of the definition of the character trait as written on the board each morning?	<b>.761</b>
	44. Enjoyed writing about the definition of the character trait?	<b>.803</b>
	45. Have been able to practice the definition of the character trait in class in relation to one another?	<b>.885</b>
	46. Have both identified and practiced several ways of demonstrating the definition of the character trait?	<b>.915</b>
	47. Critically analyzed and evaluated how effective they were in practicing the definition of the character trait?	<b>.907</b>
	48. Critically analyzed and evaluated how effective teachers and/or their parents practiced the definition of the character trait?	<b>.863</b>
	49. Read and critically analyzed and evaluated the story of a person who practiced the character trait?	<b>.910</b>
	50. Read and critically analyzed and evaluated a fictional story that demonstrated the character trait?	<b>.916</b>
	51. Have responded in a critically analytical and evaluative way to teacher's reading about the character trait in a story in literature?	<b>.912</b>
	52. Have constructed new dimensions of character traits that they could practice?	<b>.883</b>
	<b>Cronbach reliability coefficient (DISCHIMP) / Total items (10)</b>	<b>.9680</b>

**Teacher Demographics:**

53. Select One: 1= Third Grade Teacher    2 = Fourth Grade Teacher    3 = Fifth Grade Teacher

54. Select Gender:    1= Male        2 = Female

55. Select One Age Level: 1= 21-25    2 = 26-30    3 = 31-35    4 = 36 or more

56. Select Education Level: 1= BA or less than MA    2 = MA or more courses    3 = Ed.S. or more courses

57. Select Years of Experience in Education: 1 = 1-3 years    2 = 4 - 6 years    3 = 7 or more years

## APPENDIX E

Table E1

### Pearson Correlation Matrix: Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Leadership Style, Implementation of Character Education Programs, and Student Academic Improvement

	ITBS GAIN	SACAD IMP	STDIS IMP	DISCH IMP	PRN STYLE	CHIMP LEV	CHAR CLIM	SCHAR DEV	TGRADE	GENDER	TAGE	TEDUC	TEXP	FRLUNCH	SCHRANK
ITBS GAIN	1.00	.075	.032	.195*	.273 *	.252*	.162*	.139*	.039	-.020	.014	.002	-.096	-.059	-.283*
SACAD IMP	.075	1.000	.717*	.610*	.427*	.434*	.496*	.543*	-.056	-.051	.132	.131	.145*	-.242*	-.315*
STDIS IMP	.032	.717*	1.000	.547*	.375*	.269*	.430*	.492*	.015	-.152*	.110	.100	.156	-.206*	-.262*
DISCH IMP	.195	.610*	.547*	1.000	.623*	.504*	.636*	.637	-.100	.051	.069	.128	.167*	-.321*	-.394*
PRN STYLE	.273*	.427*	.375*	.623*	1.000	.662*	.656*	.601*	-.076	-.047	.053	.113	.184*	-.271*	-.376*
CHIMP LEV	.252*	.434*	.269*	.504*	.662*	1.000	.621*	.556*	-.165*	.030	-.025	.044	.147*	-.211*	-.269*
CHAR CLIM	.162*	.496*	.430*	.636*	.656*	.621*	1.000	.709*	-.127	-.084	.041	.106	.147*	-.396*	-.505*
SCHAR DEV	.139*	.543*	.492*	.637*	.601*	.556*	.709*	1.000	-.115	-.076	.117	.099	.164*	-.317*	-.387*
TGRADE	.039	-.056	.015	-.100	-.076	-.165*	-.127	-.115	1.00	-.032	.150	.167*	.070	-.043	-.036
GENDER	-.020	-.051	-.152*	.051	-.047	.030	-.084	-.076	-.032	1.000	.024	.120	.188*	-.128	-.097
TAGE	.014	.132	.110	.069	.053	-.025	.041	.117	.150	.024	1.000	.252*	.518*	-.193*	-.178

Table E1 (continued)

	ITBS GAIN	SACAD IMP	STDIS IMP	DISCH IMP	PRN STYLE	CHIMP LEV	CHAR CLIM	SCHAR DEV	TGRADE	GENDER	TAGE	TEDUC	TEXP	FRLUNCH	SCHRANK
TEDUC	.002	.131	.1000	.128	.113	.044	.106	.099	.167*	.120	.252*	1.000	.437*	-.137	-.209*
TEXP	-.096	.145	.156*	.167*	.184*	.147*	.147*	.164*	.070	.188*	.518*	.437*	1.000	-.325*	-.309*
FRLUNCH	-.059	-.242*	-.206*	-.321*	-.271*	-.211*	-.396*	-.317*	-.043	-.128	-.193*	-.137	-.325	1.000	.765*
SCHRANK	-.283*	-.315*	-.262*	-.394*	-.376*	-.269*	-.505	-.387	-.036	-.097	-.178	-.209*	-.309*	.765*	1.000

\*Denotes .05 Level of Significance

ITBSGAIN-ITBS Scores, 1999-2001

SACADIMP - Student academic Improvement

STDISIMP - Student discipline improvement

DISCHIMP - Students with discipline problems character development

PRNSTYLE - Teachers' perceptions of principal leadership style

CHIMPLEV - Level of implementation of character education

CHARCLIM - Character climate

SCHARDEV - Student character development

TGRADE - Grade level taught by teacher

GENDER - Teacher gender

TAGE - Teacher chronological age

TEDUC - Teacher educational level

TEXP - Teacher experience

FRLUNCH- Free or reduced lunch

SCHRANK - School ranking

## APPENDIX F

### Character Education Program Elementary Evaluation Form

**Character Education Chairperson/ Coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

Month:            August\_\_\_\_ September\_\_\_\_ October\_\_\_\_ November\_\_\_\_ December \_\_\_\_  
(Check One)  
                      January\_\_\_\_ February\_\_\_\_ March\_\_\_\_ April\_\_\_\_ May\_\_\_\_

1. Number of students participating in character education program by grade level:

Kindergarten	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade

2. Total number of faculty and staff implementing the character education program:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Total number of student discipline referrals to the office for the month: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Total number of attendance referrals for the month: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Parent / Community Participation: Identify the number of parents or community volunteers who participated in character education for the month: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Teacher Quality Ratings for the Character Trait of the Month

Monthly Character Traits	K	1	2	3	4	5
1. School pride						
2. Self-respect						
3. Respect for others						
4. Cooperation						
5. Tolerance						
6. Honesty						



Monthly Character Traits	K	1	2	3	4	5
7. Perseverance						
8. Courtesy						
9. Diligence						

Homeroom teacher's rating of the percentage of students in their class demonstrating significant knowledge of character traits for the month.

## II. Character Climate, Student Discipline, and Student Academic Improvement

Please use the following scale when completing this section:

A = All    B= Most    C= Some    D= Few    E= None

Teacher/ Student Interpersonal Interactions: School Climate and Academic Improvement	K	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teachers demonstrate respect for students.						
2. Students demonstrate respect for teachers.						
3. Students have made significant improvement in their academic performance.						
4. Students who were below grade level are now above grade level.						
5. Students who had a lack of motivation have now improved significantly.						
6. Students who were repeatedly being referred to the office are no longer being referred.						
7. Students who had discipline problems have improved their behavior to the level of well-behaved students.						
8. Students who had attendance problems have improved their attendance pattern to that of a regularly attended student.						

## III. School-wide Implementation of Character Education Program

Please refer to the following scale when completing this section:

A= Always    B= Most    C= Sometimes    D= Rarely    E= Never or Don't Know

Items:	A	B	C	D	E
1. To what extent were the system-wide character education traits taught consistently by teachers in the school?					
2. To what extent were administrators, teachers, and students actively involved in the implementation of a character education program on a daily basis?					

Items:	A	B	C	D	E
3. To what extent were administrators, teachers, and students committed to the principles of character education and demonstrate them consistently when interacting with others?					

Identify problems with implementing the character education program: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Identify successes of the character education program: \_\_\_\_\_

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